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Number one again

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Cover: Ronaldinho (Brazil)

EDITOR
Gavin Hamilton
ART EDITOR
Gary Payne
PRODUCTION EDITOR
Peter Neish
PICTURE EDITOR
Duncan Bond
NEWS EDITOR
Jamie Rainbow
EDITORIAL SECRETARY
June Hiscock
PICTURES
Empics, Getty Images, Reuters

Thanks this issue to
Mike Hughes, David Rallis

EDITORIAL
King's Reach Tower, Stamford Street,
London SE1 9LS
Tel: +44 (0) 20 7261 5737
Fax: +44 (0) 20 7261 7474
E-mail: world_soccer@ipcmedia.com

ADVERTISING
Greg Dunbar, Simon Gerard, Alex Mills
ADVERTORIALS AND SPONSORSHIP
Matt Johnston
PRODUCTION MANAGER
Tom Jennings
PRODUCTION CONTROLLER
Yee Lei Sheng

MANAGING DIRECTOR Paul Williams
PUBLISHING DIRECTOR Hamish Dawson

Display Ads +44 (0) 20 7261 5499
Classified Ads +44 (0) 20 7261 2823
Insert sales +44 (0) 20 7261 7710
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International licensing enquiries
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E-mail: Siriliya_Nawalkar@ipcmedia.com

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SUBSCRIPTIONS DEPARTMENT
Rockwood House,
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West Sussex RH16 3DH, England
Tel: +44 (0) 1444 475 675

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JANUARY 2006

WORLD SOCCER comment

IT IS NOW 10 years since the Bosman ruling, which changed the face of European football. The game is unrecognisable in so many ways. Who'd have thought that players of 59 different nationalities would be employed by English Premier League clubs at the start of the 2005-06 season? Or that an elitist group of superclubs would be trying to emulate Bosman's success in the courts by suing FIFA for compensation?

Yet there remain certain constants that keep our game on the straight and narrow. One is football's ability to produce genuine superstars of the calibre of Ronaldinho, *World Soccer*'s World Player of the Year for 2005.

The Brazilian always gives the impression that he would be playing football regardless of the money on offer. Over the past year, he has done things with a ball – *that* goal against Chelsea – that have surprised and delighted even the most hardened of cynics.

Football needs its superstars, of course, but we sometimes place too much importance on them, as we saw with the extraordinary reaction to the death of George Best. These days, young players are built up just to be knocked down – witness the incredible hype that is already surrounding Leo Messi, Ronaldinho's Barcelona team-mate.

The tendency to describe players as all-time greats or legends before their time is growing at an alarming rate. Part of the problem is that the over-exposure of the game's biggest stars is forcing boredom thresholds to be lowered almost daily, making the need to discover new stars all the more urgent. We know far more about Ronaldinho and David Beckham than we ever knew about Best, so the public's need to read about and watch younger and better players keeps growing.

There's no doubt that Ronaldinho will be holding our attention for many years to come. We may not be able to call him a legend just yet, but the football memories he has provided over the past 12 months make him the most eagerly anticipated star of next year's World Cup.

Included with this issue is a year planner with all the key football dates for 2006. It's going to be a big year for everyone connected with *World Soccer*, with so many people already preparing for the big kick-off in Germany. Next month, we publish the first of an exclusive series of four booklets on the 32 World Cup finalists. Roll on, Germany!

Gavin Hamilton, Editor (gavin_hamilton@ipcmedia.com)

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contents

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WS WORLD SOCCER JANUARY 2006 VOL 46 NO 4

GEORGE BEST
6 Brian Glanville
8 Tributes from abroad
66 Home Front

HEADLINERS
10 Robert Hoyzer
11 Paul Gascoigne

DISPATCHES
From our correspondents
16 Spain
18 Italy
20 Turkey
22 Brazil

2005 WORLD SOCCER AWARDS
24 The results
26 Ronaldinho
28 Jose Mourinho
29 Liverpool
30 Pierluigi Collina

WORLD CUP COUNTDOWN
Main men
34 Zlatan Ibrahimovic
35 Niko Kovac
36 Fabio Cannavaro
37 Mark Viduka
Stadiums
38 Frankfurt & Gelsenkirchen

Niko Kovac, p35

Didier Zokora, p69

IN THE SPOTLIGHT
Interviews and profiles
40 Sepp Blatter

DIGEST
48 Germany
49 France
50 UEFA Champions League
52 Rest of Europe
60 The Americas
62 Asia/Oceania
64 Africa

TALENT SCOUT
Tomorrow's stars – today
68 Fernando Gago
69 Didier Zokora
69 Ebi Smolarek

REGULARS
12 Brian Glanville
14 Jim Holden
39 My Team: Kaka
44 Paul Gardner
45 Financial Football
46 Keir Radnedge
70 Classified Ads
75 World Service
90 The Knowledge

PERMANENT CRISIS

SPAIN: The departure of Vanderlei Luxemburgo, Real Madrid's fifth coach to leave in under three years, shows the club have become an unmanageable monster. **Page 16**

TAINTED TITLE

BRAZIL: Corinthians carried off the trophy but, for many, Internacional were the true champions. **Page 22**

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WORLD CUP DRAW

All the details from Leipzig of the draw for next year's finals; plus Pele's reaction. **Page 75**

BALLACK PLAYS THE WAITING GAME

GERMANY: The Bayern Munich midfielder is playing a high-stakes game of poker over his next contract. **Page 48**

ZORO MAKES HIS MARK

ITALY: A protest by Messina's Ivory Coast defender Marco Zoro has reopened the debate about racism in calcio. **Page 18**

AL-MONTASHARI TURNS UP TO TAKE PRIZE

MALAYSIA: Saudi Arabia defender Hamad Al-Montashari was the controversial winner of the Asian Player of the Year award. **Page 62**

BAD BLOOD

TURKEY: The fall-out from the violent scenes at the World Cup play-off against Switzerland is still being felt. **Page 20**

TROUSSIER LOOKS TO WORK HIS MAGIC

MOROCCO: Philippe Troussier, nicknamed the "white witch doctor" because of his previous success in African football, is the new national team coach. **Page 65**

UNITED CRASH OUT

UEFA CHAMPIONS LEAGUE: Manchester United were the biggest casualties of the group stage. A 2-1 defeat at Benfica meant they failed to qualify for the knockout stages for the first time in 10 years. **Page 50**

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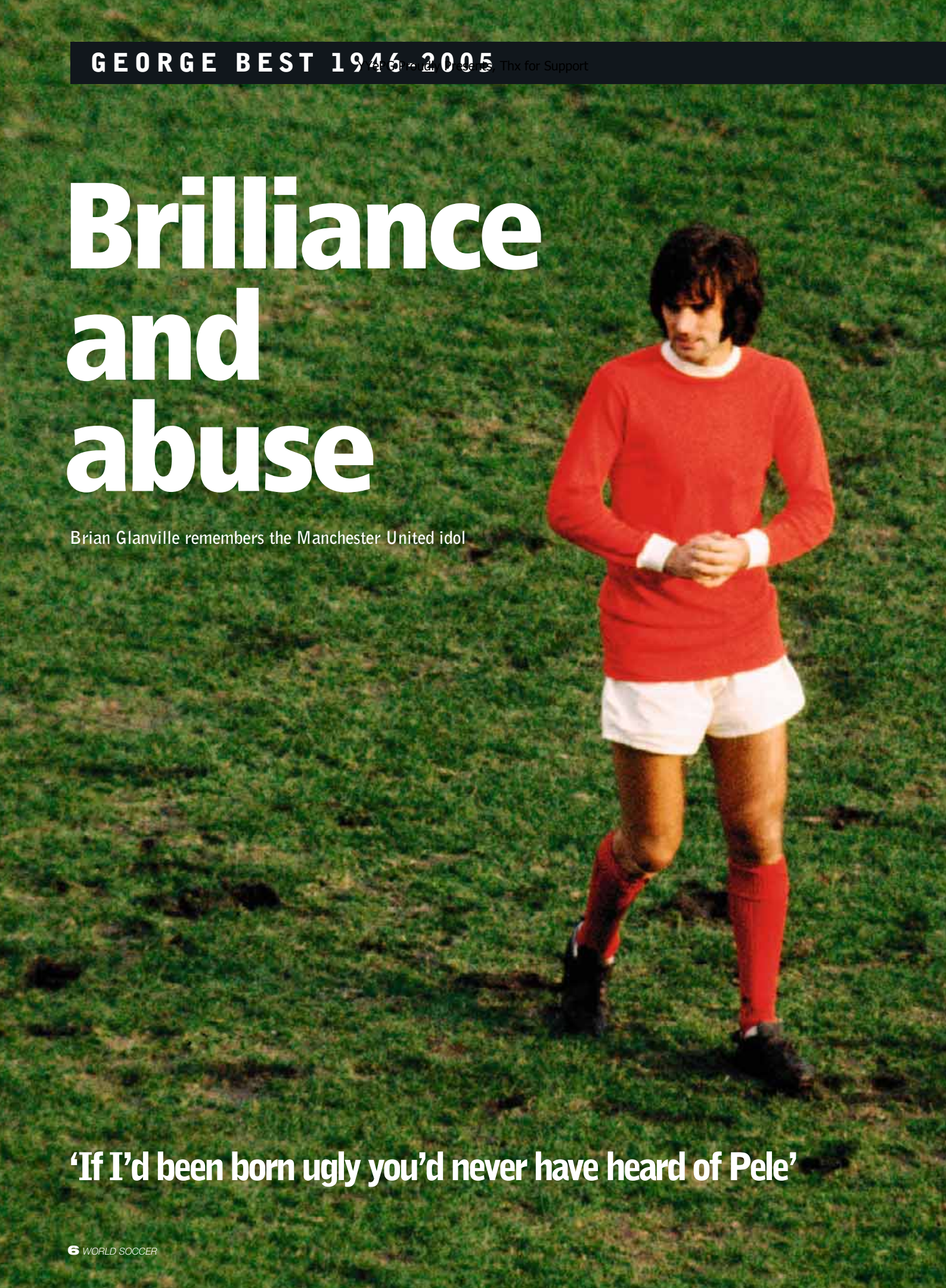
Brilliance and abuse

Brian Glanville remembers the Manchester United idol



'If I'd been born ugly you'd never have heard of Pele'

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IT IS TEMPTING to forget George Best's long, tormented, alcohol-ridden postscript to his playing career, and think only of the brilliance of his best years. I knew him and admired him from when he was 17, although I was wrong to write, after one of his earliest tours de force at Highbury, "the new wave is coming in gently". Alas, it would subsequently come in with the destructive – or self-destructive – force of a tidal wave.

Could he have been helped? Could something have been done to save him from himself? Within the severely limited context of football, I doubt it. But if something could have been done, the time to do it was when he was still a shy and potentially biddable teenager, fresh from Belfast – to which he instantly returned from Manchester United when he first went there as a 15-year-old – not in his subsequent days as a star, an idol. By the time Matt Busby would take him into his office and point out the error of his ways, an impervious Best, far from listening, would merely be studying the wallpaper behind Busby's desk. Besides, for all his shrewd, practical psychology as a football manager, Busby, like the majority in that job, was essentially a simple man from an unsophisticated background. Best clearly needed expert help, but as we well know, the most expert of psychiatric, psychoanalytic help can all too often be quite futile.

"If I'd been born ugly," Best once said memorably if immodestly, "you'd never have heard of Pele." He was certainly the greatest of all British post-war players, supremely versatile, the embodiment of Total Football well before it became the Dutch and German fashion. And whatever the ultimate chaos of his private life, he was a self-critical perfectionist as a player, following the old fashion of wearing a gym shoe on his stronger foot to improve the weaker and staying long after training had finished to shoot ball after ball against the crossbar. His dexterity was phenomenal – he could flip a coin over his shoulder and catch it in the top pocket of his jacket. But then, what couldn't he do with a football?

Though only 5ft 8in, Best could outjump taller defenders to head spectacular goals. He had supreme ball control plus the courage and strength to retain possession under severe pressure. Often ill-used, he very seldom retaliated, though there was an exception when he got himself sent off at Old Trafford in the 1968 World Club Cup second leg against the bruising, brutal Estudiantes de La Plata. I'd been in Buenos Aires to see the first leg, in the Bombonera, Boca Juniors' stadium, following which Best told me that after 15 minutes he simply stopped going for 50-50 balls, knowing he would be fouled and given no protection by the referee.

Tide-turner

What were his finest goals? There were many; three of them at least against Benfica when they were in their prime. Probably the best remembered of these is the goal with which he turned the tide for United at Wembley in the 1968 European Cup Final. United were running out of steam, the game had gone into extra-time, when Best, right at the start of it, picked up a long ball from keeper Alex Stepney, pirouetted dynamically past his marker, cruised past Henrique, the goalkeeper, and stroked the ball into the net. Suddenly, United were vibrant again, Benfica lost their sparkle, and United went on to win 4-1.

Yet Best had arguably been in more extraordinary form in a previous European Cup game against Benfica, the 1965-66 quarter-final second leg at the Stadium of Light, where the Eagles of Lisbon had been unbeaten in European football for many years. Within six minutes, Best had leaped to head a spectacular goal. Six minutes more and he slalomed past three defenders to make it 2-0. United won 5-1.

In Best's early footballing years, he was charming, humorous and modest. I remember once sitting behind him on the United team coach – it would be unthinkable to get on board these days – when he turned and told me: "They're making Malcolm Allison the new England coach. They're putting the seats in his mouth!"

The last time I met him was by a beach in Los Angeles, where he'd gone to play for Los Angeles Aztecs. His career at United had stuttered to a virtual halt when, in a piece of silly bravado, he had skipped their visit to Chelsea on a Saturday afternoon and spent the weekend in the London flat of actress Sinead Cusack – to the ire not only of his manager but also of Bobby Charlton, with whom he never got on. Yet Charlton, to his great credit, was a frequent visitor to Best's hospital bed.

There was for a time, as we know, life after Manchester United, although I still have bleak memories of seeing his final match for them at Queen's Park Rangers. Overweight, slow, far from match-fit, he was viciously abused by fans who in the past must unconsciously have envied as well as admired him and were now exhibiting their petty spite and the ambivalence aroused by heroes.

In Los Angeles, he was cheerfully at ease, living in a house just across from the beach, strolling, bare-chested in white shorts, through a glass-fronted bar on to the beach itself. People there, he said amiably, would be asking: "Who is George Best?"

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Tributes *from abroad*

● "Trying to stop Best was like trying to capture the wind."
Ex-USSR captain Albert Shesternev

● "He was without doubt one of the all-time greats. His dribbling skills and his brilliant goals will be remembered for ever. I'd place him in the football hall of fame just behind Maradona and Pele."
Ex-Internazionale and Italy defender Tarcisio Burgnich

● "Best was a poet on the ball, an artist. In the 1960s, there were few, if any, better. He twice put paid to Benfica's chances in the Champions Cup, but you feel no shame to lose to such a champion."
Former Benfica captain Mario Coluna

● "I played against Best in one of his last games for Northern Ireland, in 1977, and though we won easily 5-0, you could still see what all the fuss was about. The balance, the touch, the dribbling skills and the charisma remained. He was one of the greatest of the last half-century."
Bernd Holzenbein, the former West Germany and Eintracht Frankfurt winger

● "I know from first-hand experience how difficult it was to prevent him running riot. Once he'd started to dribble, that was that, he was gone. Often fouls were the only way to try to stop him, and even then he had the perfect balance and strength to ride the challenges."
Ex-Germany and Milan defender Karl-Heinz Schnellinger

"George Best invented rock and roll football. I loved to watch him on TV when I was young. He didn't just play in matches, he gave performances, and at the highest level."
Michel Platini

● "George Best could take on and beat entire teams on his own. He was a master dribbler who made it look so easy. It's a terrible shame alcohol brought him to this end, but his legend will live on."
Francesco Gento

● "His qualities were unique. You couldn't coach them. When you talk about European football, you would have to say he was among the best five or six of all time. His career was relatively brief but nonetheless exceptional."
Johan Cruyff

● "He played the sort of exciting, adventurous football that made the game so appealing. It's tragic that he has died so young. Geniuses often don't see the world as everyone else does. You have to accept them for what they are."
Former West Germany defender Paul Breitner

● "Best was a symbol, an icon of the 1960s, both on and off the field. With his hairstyle, socks around his ankles and incredible feints and tricks on the ball, he was some sight. He was truly competitive but it was also evident that he really enjoyed himself on the pitch."
Fabio Cudicini, former Milan keeper and father of Chelsea keeper Carlo

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● 12/11/05

Advantage Uruguay…Dario Rodriguez heads the only goal of the World Cup play-off first leg against Australia

● 16/11/05

Uplifting…Czech Republic players hoist coach Karel Bruckner after sealing qualification for the World Cup with a play-off win against Norway

● 16/11/05

Get set…David Villa prepares to overtake Roman Kratochvil of Slovakia during the second leg of Spain's play-off triumph

HEADLINERS

ROBERT HOYZER

Disgraced German ref faces prison term

ROBERT HOYZER will, if judge Gerti Kramer has her way, go to prison for two years and five months for match-fixing in Europe's highest-profile football corruption case in a decade.

The 26-year-old referee from Berlin admitted fixing or trying to fix nine matches in the lower leagues and German Cup. The most notable was Hamburg's 4-2 Cup defeat by regional league side Paderborn in August 2004. Kramer said Hoyzer's actions merited a jail term, despite the prosecution's weak suggestion that he be handed only a two-year suspended sentence in light of his confession and his co-operation during the preliminaries to the trial. Hoyzer has appealed against the sentence.

Ante Sapina, Croat mastermind of the betting ring with which Hoyzer was involved, was jailed for two years 11 months and his brothers Filip and Milan were handed suspended sentences. Another referee, Dominik Marks, received a suspended sentence of 18 months.

The trial of former Borussia Dortmund player Steffen Karl, who is facing match-rigging charges, is continuing separately.

The case concerned domestic not international matches and so will not enshroud the Germany-hosted World Cup finals as had been feared. But the permanent scar inflicted on the domestic game was Ante Sapina's boast that he

> 'Sapina boasted he knew players who were prepared, for the right fee, to play below their best, to give away penalties'

knew players who were prepared, for the right fee, to play below their best, to give away penalties, dive to win them and even get themselves sent off.

For how many years? Too many. Are they still there? Almost certainly.

Hoyzer met Sapina in May 2004 at the brothers' Berlin bar, where they began discussing fixing matches to rig a profit on the betting. No international scam, just a cosy little private con. Or so they would have the game believe.

The project got off to a shaky start. In the first match Hoyzer was forced to reverse a "fixed" penalty award when the linesman insisted the foul had taken place outside the area.

Second time out the result went Sapina's way without Hoyzer having to play tricks. Sapina, ignorant of the fact and focused only on the result, sent Hoyzer a celebratory text: "Fatty, you're my man now!"

Fixer…Hoyzer has admitted rigging matches

So it went on. Hoyzer ultimately turned state's evidence in the hope of a lighter sentence. What is not clear is how much money he made. Sapina made at least £1.4million through betting on fixed matches but Hoyzer, it seems, received little more than £50,000 and a plasma-screen television.

Sapina would also have bought him a top-of-the-range Audi…until he discovered that the referee did not drive.

Perhaps Hoyzer will clarify the extent of his own illegal rewards in the book he is writing. Maybe not. Whatever he writes, no one will trust it. He is damaged goods, just as he has damaged German football.

Keir Radnedge

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● 16/11/05

Flag day…Stern John celebrates Trinidad & Tobago's first World Cup qualification after the play-off win against Bahrain

● 19/11/05

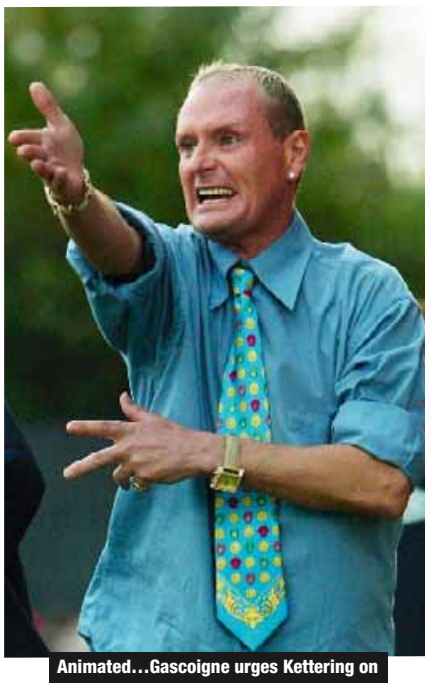
Happy clappy…Barcelona players salute their fans after the 3-0 win away to Real Madrid

PAUL GASCOIGNE

Bleak prospects for the alcoholic former England star

AT HIS BEST, Paul Gascoigne's timing was always immaculate, whether striking a shot or delivering a pass. The timing of his departure from non-League Kettering was similarly if sadly well-timed, coming two days after the funeral of George Best.

At least Best won the European Cup, two League titles and the European Footballer of the Year accolade. None of that fell to the similarly self-destructive Gazza, for all his remarkable talent, which earned him 57 caps over nine years between 1989 and 1998.



Animated…Gascoigne urges Kettering on

Like Best, Gascoigne put himself through a string of therapies and detox centres seeking to exorcise his demons. Like Best, he failed.

When chairman Imraan Ladak presented Gascoigne as manager of Kettering in the Conference North – England's sixth level – he presented renewed hope that this time the "Fat Boy" had cracked it.

But the sight of a gaunt Gascoigne fuming through cigarette after cigarette after an FA Cup first-round defeat by Stevenage Borough was evidence only of an enduring inner volatility.

No one was surprised when the sacking came after 39 days…except Gascoigne, who disputed Ladak's claim that he was "under the influence of alcohol before, during and after several first-team games and training sessions".

Yet, once again, the self-destructive urge would not be denied. Within hours of the Kettering bust-up Gascoigne found himself held overnight in a police cell in Liverpool after an altercation with a photographer at a charity event.

> 'The self-destructive urge would not be denied'

In his autobiography, Gascoigne concludes: "I fulfilled my dreams but I didn't fulfil my potential…Now I can move on, I hope. Don't know where, though. I wish I did."

The prospects do not look good.

Keir Radnedge

Numbers game

£288m…

the amount paid by Coca-Cola to extend its sponsorship deal with FIFA until 2022.

£17.34m…

the total earnings for 2004 of Footwork Productions, the company set up by David Beckham as a vehicle for his commercial endorsements.

£131.9m…

the total prize money available from FIFA for teams at the 2006 World Cup finals.

£10.77m…

the prize money on offer to the winners.

£2.63m…

the minimum payment on offer to all 32 finalists.

340…

the number of days Vanderlei Luxemburgo lasted as Real Madrid coach.

74…

the combined age of Romario (39 years, 22 goals) and Robson (35, 21), the leading scorers in the 2005 Brazilian national championship.

45…

the number of people per World Cup country to whom FIFA will provide business-class flights and pay daily expenses of £175 at the finals.

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● 23/11/05

Free for all…Real Madrid and Lyon players fight after a bad challenge on Guti during the 1-1 draw

● 23/11/05

More to come…Andrii Shevchenko celebrates the first of his four goals in Milan's 4-0 win away to Fenerbahce

● 27/11/05

Applauding George…Manchester United players pay tribute to George Best before their League game at West Ham

WS WORLD SOCCER Brian Glanville

…on how much Man Utd have missed Giggs…Keane – the good, the bad and the ugly…why Turkey should have been punished before now… and Luca Toni's long road to the top

IT IS STRANGE that in all the furore over Roy Keane, Manchester United and Alex Ferguson, nothing seems to have been said about Ryan Giggs and his costly absence. He returned to action only in early December after his cheek was fractured in a collision with Lille defender Stathis Tavlaridis during a Champions League encounter in October. Without him, the team have hardly been the same, even if they have two other fast and talented wingers in Cristiano Ronaldo and Park Ji-sung.

For me, Giggs remains the outstanding British player of his generation, and how can his speed, his skill, his balance and experience not be missed?

Are you OK?…Lille's Mathieu Chalme checks on Ryan Giggs after the collision

'Giggs remains the outstanding British player of his generation. How can his speed, skill, balance and experience not be missed?'

As for the Keane Affair, it raises memories of what happened to him on that Japanese island, just before the 2002 World Cup. The Irish had chosen a ludicrously unsuitable venue for their training camp, a place better equipped with casinos and brothels than football facilities. Keane made no secret of his angry disdain, and manager Mick McCarthy decided to confront him – in the presence of several of his team-mates.

It seemed a rash and dangerous thing to do. Had the two met on their own, perhaps Keane's defenestration might have been avoided. But there was nothing more predictable than that Keane would feel humiliated by being so publicly rebuked, and his consequent, four-letter outburst was as inevitable as his expulsion.

As to his more recent diatribe on Manchester United's own television channel, surely that could have been anticipated too. The abysmal surrender at Middlesbrough was obviously anathema to a player as committed as Keane. Again, his reaction was utterly predictable. So much so that you have to feel that if culprits there were, they had to be whoever invited him on the programme in the first place.

Undoubtedly it is easier to admire Keane than to like him. The Alf Inge Haaland episodes, to which he so shamelessly refers in his hugely successful autobiography, testify all too deplorably to that. It will be remembered that Keane was his own victim when, in a game at Leeds, he tried to foul Haaland but was badly hurt himself and was out of the game for months.

But he was pondering what he so disputably thought of as revenge, and duly took it when he next came up against the Norwegian at Old Trafford, brutally hacking him to the ground then standing over him

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● 27/11/05

Cool it…Adriano tries to calm Messina defender Marco Zoro after Inter fans subject him to a volley of monkey chants

● 28/11/05

Golden Ball…Ronaldinho of Barcelona is named European Footballer of the Year, emulating fellow Brazilians Ronaldo and Rivaldo

and abusing him. A horribly vindictive cameo.

Yet there can be no doubt about Keane's massive contribution to United's past success. How sad that, after inspiring their dramatic recovery against Juventus in Turin in the 1999 European Cup semi-final, he should find himself suspended from the Final. Had he been present in Barcelona against Bayern Munich, I imagine United would have won with a great deal less last-gasp drama.

RECENTLY, Sepp Blatter has been waffling on about stopping the playing of national anthems before international matches, since they are so often jeered. Yet he still appears to strain at a gnat and swallow a camel. He has promised to come down hard on the miscreants at the appalling Turkey v Switzerland World Cup qualifying play-off in Istanbul, and the Swiss were by no means guiltless in the abysmal fracas that followed the final whistle. But the Turks are shameful recidivists.

Why, I still wonder, did they get away so lightly after the outrageous behaviour of their fans at a qualifying match against Macedonia in Istanbul? Such was the bombardment of Macedonian players from the stands that it was almost impossible to take a corner. The obvious corollary was to force the Turks to play a number of future home internationals in a neutral country, or at least behind closed doors. But they got away with a slap on the wrist; and so it goes on. Good old FIFA. Willing to wound and yet afraid to strike, you might say.

Leading scorer…Luca Toni

THE day Fiorentina beat Milan 3-1 at home, I had a phone call from my old friend Giampiero Maseri, formerly sports editor and football correspondent of Florentine newspaper *La Nazione*. He asked if anything was being written about Fiorentina in England? Only by me, I had to reply; but I was intrigued by the achievements of Luca Toni, one of those impressive late developers who, even in this age of child footballers snapped up by acquisitive clubs, still seem to come through in Italy. Toni scored two of those goals against Milan, putting him well ahead of all other Serie A goalscorers with 15.

The forward, 1.93m tall and weighing 88 kilos, is a forbidding opponent, not least in the air. But his passage to the top has been a long one, having knocked around in the lower divisions at Modena, Empoli, Fiorenzuola, Lodigiani and Treviso before hitting Serie A with Vicenza in 2000-01. The next season came yet another move, this time to Brescia, and when the goals dried up there he was offloaded to Palermo, then in Serie B, in summer 2003. But he found prolific success at the Sicilian club, hitting no fewer than 30 goals in 45 matches and winning promotion and prestige.

At Fiorentina this season, he has continued to flourish, and is now also an international.

Toni is a Florentine hero, though he dismisses any comparison with former idol Gabriel Batistuta, who scored so profusely for Fiorentina and even had a statue to himself erected on the terracing.

'The Swiss were by no means guiltless in the fracas, but the Turks are shameful recidivists'

Notes & quotes

"It started so badly but at least I managed to get back into the game."
Mainz defender Nikolce Noveski gives his verdict after scoring two own goals in the first six minutes against Eintracht Frankfurt and then heading home at the right end to help his side to a 2-2 draw.

"Ailton is too old and too fat."
Undiplomatic new Besiktas coach Jean Tigana gives his reasons for putting the maverick Brazilian striker on the transfer list.

Size matters…Ailton

"It was not a humiliation, just a defeat. We lost a match but not the championship."
Zinedine Zidane plays down Real Madrid's 3-0 thumping at the hands of Barcelona at the Bernabeu.

"I will not abandon a sinking ship."
Star Uruguayan midfielder Alvaro Recoba refuses to jump into the international retirement lifeboat following his country's World Cup qualifying play-off loss to Australia.

"I see Lilian [Thuram] every day and could talk to him about it. I also have a great relationship with Zizou [Zidane] and Claude [Makelele]."
Patrick Vieira reveals on French TV that he was the go-between who paved the way for the veteran trio's return to the national team.

"Oops, we've done it again. There goes another Bafana coach."
The Cape Argus on the resignation of Stuart Baxter as South Africa boss.

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● 03/12/05

In memoriam…George Best's funeral service is held at Stormont

● 03/12/05

Leave, please!…David Beckham is ushered off the field having been shown a red card during Real Madrid's 1-0 win against Getafe

● 06/12/05

Tight fit…Chelsea and Liverpool draw 0-0 for the second time in their Champions League group

WS WORLD SOCCER Jim Holden

Who follows Fergie?

The Manchester United succession will be fascinating

AS ONE OF the truly great managerial eras stumbles rather forlornly towards its close, the inevitable question being asked by Manchester United supporters is, who next?

Most independent observers, and an increasing number of fans, believe the reign of Sir Alex Ferguson will end next summer if United go another season without winning a trophy. At any other superclub across Europe he would have departed already after so many poor signings and lacklustre matches in recent times.

An even more important question, however, needs to be answered first – who decides?

Will it be the owners of the club, the reclusive Glazer family from Florida, who know almost nothing about soccer but whose money is at stake? Or will it be mild-mannered chief executive David Gill, who knows the game well enough but who has never had to make a choice of this magnitude before?

If it is Gill, you suspect he would take the safety-first option and go for one of the wise and experienced masters of European management. And there is what seems a splendid choice among a list containing Ottmar Hitzfeld, Fabio Capello, Sven Goran Eriksson and Guus Hiddink. All are widely admired, all are proven trophy-winners, all could walk into the Old Trafford dressing-room and command instant respect.

And all are relatively old, men for whom working at Old Trafford would be just another major job rather than the place to create their reputation and build a new dynasty.

So what? Well, I reckon it matters at United, a club built on the long-term excellence of two dynastic managers, Sir Matt Busby and then Sir Alex. And I reckon it matters particularly in English football, where all the finest managers began their most important jobs in their forties.

This list, it seems to me, brooks no argument. It includes Busby, Ferguson, Bill Shankly, Stan Cullis, Bill Nicholson, Sir Alf Ramsey, Don Revie, Brian Clough, Terry Venables, George Graham and Arsene Wenger. The trend continues today with Jose Mourinho and Rafa Benitez – the current champion managers of England and Europe, and voted first and second in the *World Soccer* awards for 2005.

'Perhaps it's better the Glazers ignore the easy, misplaced clamour for a Capello or Hiddink'

Four of the top five were young managers, Frank Rijkaard and Marco Van Basten the others. Only Capello from the old-timers made it.

This should not be a surprise. The energy, dynamism, stamina and ambition of youth matters just as much in the mental process of management as it does on the physical side of actually being a footballer on the pitch.

It is a sporting truth the Glazers appear to understand. The good and sensible option for management is the one they took when first acquiring the Tampa Bay Buccaneers American football team, ditching an old favourite and bringing in a new young coach, who swiftly guided the club to Superbowl success.

So perhaps it doesn't matter that the owners know nothing of soccer, that none of them could be bothered to attend the first United home match after the death of George Best and to witness first hand how much history and emotion surrounds the club.

Perhaps it's better to stand back from sentiment – and to ignore the easy, misplaced clamour for a Capello or a Hiddink.

But the question, then, still remains. If the Glazers have the sense and the courage to take United marching forward with a new young manager, who will it be?

While Ferguson has hung around for a few years after his first abandoned retirement, the club have already lost the chance to snap up Mourinho, Benitez or Rijkaard. None of them will go to Old Trafford next summer.

But there is a strong contingent of youth from which to choose. In no particular order I would mention Van Basten, David Moyes, Paul Le Guen, Stuart Pearce, Michael Laudrup, Mark Hughes and Alan Curbishley.

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Taking control…Milan beat Schalke 3-2 to top their Champions League group

● 06/12/05

Made it!…Rangers players celebrate reaching the Champions League last 16 after a 1-1 draw at home to Internazionale

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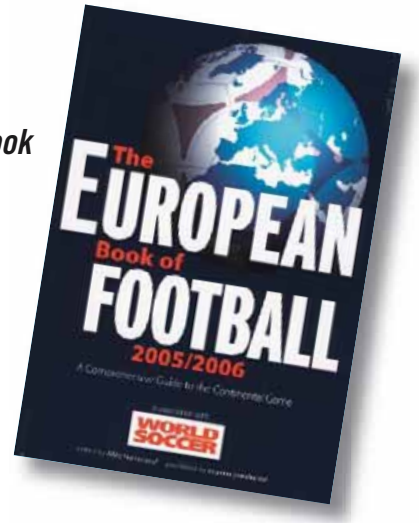

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Kasey Keller…
the Borussia Monchengladbach keeper was named the USA's Footballer of the Year.

Still got it…Romario

Romario…
the 39-year-old Vasco da Gama striker finished as top scorer in the Brazilian national championship with 22 goals.

Ole Gunnar Solskjaer…
played his first game, for Manchester United's reserve side, since he injured his knee in the 2004 FA Cup Final.

GOOD MONTH FOR…

BAD MONTH FOR…

Panned…Christian Vieri

Nemanja Vucicevic…
the 1860 Munich and Serbia & Montenegro striker was banned for six months by the German federation after testing positive for finasteride, a banned substance he claimed he was using as a treatment for baldness.

Bahrain…
they failed in their appeal to FIFA to get their World Cup qualifying play-off against Trinidad & Tobago replayed on the grounds that a late disallowed goal should have been allowed to stand.

Christian Vieri…
the Milan striker was voted Serie A's worst player in a poll of Italian radio listeners.

Xavi…
the Barcelona midfielder injured his knee during a training session and could now miss the World Cup.

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The long walk home…Luxemburgo's dismissal came just five days after president Florentino Perez declared there was no reason to sack him

Permanent crisis

The departure of Real Madrid's fifth coach in under three years shows the club have become an unmanageable monster

SID LOWE in Madrid

ANOTHER ONE bites the dust. Vanderlei Luxemburgo has become the latest victim of galactic Real Madrid, sacked just 11 months after taking over at the Santiago Bernabeu. His replacement is the coach of Madrid's B team Castilla, Juan Roman Lopez Caro – the club's sixth manager in less than three years, their fourth in 18 months.

And there will be more to come. If Lopez Caro was under any illusions about his provisional status, they were crudely dispelled by vice-president Emilio Butragueno's blunt admission that "we needed someone to travel to Greece with the team [for the Champions League tie with Olympiakos]".

"What we need now," he added rather hopefully, "is tranquillity and normality." And yet what is normal at Real Madrid is not tranquillity. Heads rolling – now, that's what's normal at Madrid.

The day after Luxemburgo's sacking came the resignation of Arrigo Sacchi, who as a non-board member had no say in the decision to dismiss the Brazilian even though as sporting director it is presumably his job to hire and fire coaches.

Madrid, now looking for a fourth director of football in three years as well as a seventh coach, have become a club in permanent crisis. President Florentino Perez has created an unmanageable monster, a satiated, divided squad of ageing players, many of whom resent an institution where the foundations and principles of sporting success have been discarded, where marketing ranks ahead of meritocracy, where tours of the Far East take precedence over pre-season training.

A club where coaches are stripped of all authority, and too many players – over-indulged and safe in the knowledge that they

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will play come what may – simply do not care; where those that do care grow more and more frustrated. David Beckham's palpable fury at his team-mates' refusal to work underlies his recent propensity for crazy challenges, while Pablo Garcia admitted with a resigned shrug: "Sometimes, not everyone runs."

Madrid have created an environment, a culture, that is not conducive to success. Two trophyless years are no coincidence. They are a behemoth run like an amateur club with a £240million budget, one that has, as one first-teamer put it, "lost its soul", where the manager always carries the can – just so long as the man really responsible does not. And the man carrying the can this time is Luxemburgo – which is not to say he is blameless; far from it.

The fact that he arrived with an entirely Brazilian back-room team, indulged (and joined in) the caprices of compatriot players Roberto Carlos and Ronaldo, and was seen as a father figure for underachieving superstar Robinho – bought from Santos last summer – only exacerbated divisions within the squad.

One of Madrid's Spanish first-teamers confided: "We Spaniards are completely irrelevant here," while Robinho's agent, Vagner Ribeiro, ranted: "The Spanish players have a problem with the Brazilians. Raul, Helguera and Guti don't like the Brazilians and made life difficult for Luxe. His departure is bad news for Robinho."

Criminally defensive

Luxemburgo's failures have extended to the field, too. His bizarre insistence on a 4-2-2-2 "magic rectangle" formation left Madrid without width, his commitment to a counter-attacking game meant forfeiting possession at a club whose fans expect to dominate games, and he was criminally defensive for a man boasting such a ludicrously talented squad. Even allowing for injuries, of which Madrid have had many, few forgave him when his starting XI against Real Betis included seven defenders. The fans' patience really wore thin when he replaced an attacking player in Beckham with a defender – Michel Salgado – against Lyon in the Champions League.

Results didn't follow either – Madrid lost five of their opening 12 League matches, and none of their seven wins was against a side in the top half of the table – but bizarrely Luxemburgo was sacked after a 1-0 home victory over Getafe in the 14th round, having seemingly escaped the axe with a last-gasp 2-2 draw away to Real Sociedad the previous week. However, what mattered about the Getafe game was not the points but the fact that Madrid were truly awful, that they had been dominated by their opponents – a tiny club – and that they were extremely lucky to win.

Getafe president Angel Torres said afterwards: "A decent team would have stuck eight past Madrid tonight," and he was right. Sitting alongside him, Perez had made up his mind. Never mind the fact that five days earlier he had insisted: "There is no reason to sack Luxemburgo" – it was time to sack him.

The following night, having kept everyone hanging on all day, the sacking was finally confirmed, Butragueno the man forced to sit and fidget uncomfortably before the cameras, ducking questions as best he could. "We needed to perform a 180-degree turn," he said. Just as he had said: "We need to perform a 180-degree turn," when announcing Luxemburgo's arrival. "Two 180-degree turns leave you facing the same way," one commentator helpfully pointed out.

Madrid had come full circle and nothing had changed. And that had been proved by their 3-0 defeat by Barcelona on November 19 – almost exactly a year to the day since last season's 3-0 defeat by their arch-rivals. Just as last term's hammering at Camp Nou prompted talk of the end of an era, so this year's – in Madrid – confirmed this season's doomsday scenarios and left Luxemburgo on the ropes.

The naked truth

What made the Bernabeu game so striking was that it was no one-off. It was, rather, a perfect portrait of the two clubs. Here was the truth, as naked as the inevitable streaker racing on to the pitch.

"Barca attack better, defend better and play better," shrugged Salgado. But for goalkeeper Iker Casillas, Madrid might have lost by six or seven. Barcelona had 23 shots, Madrid three, and the visitors were superior in every respect. Carles Puyol played with his heart on his sleeve and his hair in his eyes as usual, Xavi – who has since suffered a knee ligament injury which could unsettle Barca – moved the ball with pace and precision, Leo Messi ran Madrid ragged and Samuel Eto'o was as deadly, driven and determined as ever. As for Ronaldinho, he was simply sensational. But Barca were a unit, too, not just great individuals.

As one television commentator neatly put it: "Ladies and gentlemen, you've been watching a great football team tonight. You've also seen Real Madrid." Madrid are not even a team, they're not even much of a collection of individuals any more. "The blue-and-purples are a football team, the whites are an accident," said the *ABC* newspaper.

"One team has a plan and is designed to play football, signing players to fit a model. It's not just a team – it's an idea of football," wrote *El Pais's* Santiago Segurola. "The other does not follow any plan. Madrid are the product of an economic ideal that has left football relegated to secondary status, a team without an identity. If Madrid do not react soon, Barcelona will have free rein to make this their era. Everything Madrid try to do with advertising stars, Barcelona will achieve by playing football."

And playing it wonderfully – led by a man whom Madrid rejected because he was too ugly but who was so good that even the capital's press was falling at his feet. "Ronaldinho," ran *AS's* front page, "is a superior being." Which is precisely what Butragueno once said of Perez. Few would say the same now.

Little known…Lopez Caro

Real Madrid's decision to appoint Juan Roman Lopez Caro as coach was so badly thought out that he was still on his way back from Tarragona, where Madrid's B team had just won their Second Division match, when the announcement was made. So little known was he that Real Madrid TV's portrait of him was, literally, a two-minute list of the clubs he has been at, peppered with words like "hard-working" and "demanding".

'You've been watching a great football team tonight. You've also seen Real Madrid'

A Spanish TV commentator sums up the difference between Barcelona and the faltering galacticos

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Zoro makes his mark

The Messina defender's protest has reopened the debate about racism in calcio

PADDY AGNEW in Rome

THE ISSUE OF racism in Italian football has once again raised its ugly head following a protest about abuse by Messina's Ivorian defender Marco Zoro during a home League game against Internazionale. The 22-year-old picked up the ball and went across to one of the assistant referees to demand that the game be stopped, saying he was outraged by the systematic racist abuse directed at him by a small number of Inter fans.

Zoro later said: "It's bad enough that I have to put up with fans making monkey noises and calling me a black shit every time Messina play away from home, but I have never before been systematically insulted at my home ground. That's just too much. For a minute or two, that's all I could think of. I thought: 'We've got to stop this game, it's really important we send a strong message to these people, otherwise this shameful behaviour will never end.' "

Instead, Zoro was placated by team-mates, opponents and match officials alike, the game finished and Inter went away with a 2-0 win.

Black Inter players such as Nigerian Obafemi Martins and Brazilian Adriano had been among those pleading with Zoro to stay

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Hold on…Inter forward Adriano tries to persuade Zoro to continue with the game

on the pitch and not force the suspension of the game.

"They were decent about the whole thing because they get the same sort of treatment themselves every Sunday," Zoro said. "The only thing was I got the impression they were more worried about finishing the game because they were winning 2-0. Yet, in my opinion, a strong gesture like stopping the game would have done good for the whole world of football."

Certainly, the gesture generated a lot of comment in the Italian media. *Gazzetta Dello Sport* said: "The day that players respond to those idiots who shout racist abuse at players by walking off the pitch…will be a great day, and not just for football."

After the game, Inter president Giacinto Facchetti personally apologised to Zoro, and Inter owner Massimo Moratti expressed his solidarity, saying: "Zoro is terrific. He has the courage and the indignation of he who is in the right. He did dead right. I admire him for it."

Furthermore, the Italian federation then decreed that the following week's Italian Cup and Serie A games be started five minutes later than originally scheduled and preceded by the players entering the pitch carrying a banner with the words "No To Racism".

It might all sound like a genuine caring response. Yet, when UEFA organised a congress on racism in London two years ago, inviting all European federations and many of the continent's biggest clubs, Italian representatives were notable by their absence.

Lip service

Until we have proof to the contrary, the suspicion remains that the Italian football authorities pay lip service to the issue of combating racism in the game without really understanding or wanting to understand the seriousness of the problem.

So what exactly will it take for Italian football to deal with the racism issue seriously? Some sort of racist-inspired tragedy? Let us hope not. Perhaps if the players did walk off the pitch the point would be made. Perhaps Zoro was absolutely right.

As for the football, the past month has allowed a true assessment to be made of the qualities of surprise package Fiorentina. Three successive games against Milan, Roma and leaders Juventus were always destined to be a big test for Cesare Prandelli's emerging team; a final balance sheet of one win, one draw and one defeat, in that order, just about reflects their current crossroads status – they have the potential but not yet either the experience or the self-belief.

While big Luca Toni continues to score goals by the hatful, his team-mates still freeze like rabbits caught in headlights when they play away from home, as against Roma in the 1-1 draw and the earlier 1-0 defeat against Inter. In front of their passionate fans at the Artemi Franchi stadium, however, Fiorentina are capable of putting up a good fight against anyone. They proved it with their 3-1 win over Milan and unlucky 2-1 defeat to Juventus. Fiorentina hit the woodwork three times in the latter match, and Juve did not get their winner until the 88th minute. Visiting coach Fabio Capello admitted that a draw would have been a fairer result and suggested that Fiorentina would prove "one of those teams" that will cause problems for everyone right to the end of the season.

Coach in waiting…Albertini

Former Milan and Italy midfielder Demetrio Albertini has announced his retirement at the age of 34. The man known as the "metronome" for his ability to dictate a game's rhythm made his decision after failing to find a club following his return to Italy last summer from a six-month spell with Barcelona. Albertini won five League titles and two Champions Leagues during his 14 seasons at Milan, whom he left in 2002 for Atalanta. He says a future in coaching is "just about inevitable".

Milan go through

Juve's win put them eight points clear of second-placed Milan, who had suffered a shock 2-1 defeat at little Chievo the day before. Milan found some consolation a few days later by making it into the last 16 of the Champions League with a nailbiting 3-2 home win against Schalke in their final group game. A 3-3 draw would have sent Schalke and not Milan into the next round, so the Milan faithful were kept on the edge of their seats right to the end.

The strengths and weaknesses of Carlo Ancelotti's side were both in evidence against the Bundesliga team. Moving forward, they played some excellent football, with Brazilian Kaka orchestrating their best moves and scoring two of the goals. But in defence, especially at set-pieces, they were yet again caught out, and their failings allowed Schalke their sight of progress which made it such a nerve-jangling finale.

At the final whistle, Milan's acting boss Adriano Galliani embraced Ancelotti on the pitch in a very public gesture that underlined the tension of the night. Galliani later said that as long as he was in charge, Ancelotti would remain at his post. Those words were doubtless said in response to the wave of media speculation about the coach's future, especially after the Chievo loss. Cynics will wonder if Galliani would have made the same comments in the wake of a Champions League elimination.

'I have never before been systematically insulted at my home ground. That's too much'

Zoro explains why he decided to try to get the game stopped

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It all kicks off here…Turkey's Alpay Ozalan lashes out at Swiss opponent Marco Streller as tempers flare after the second leg in Istanbul

Bad blood

Recriminations follow violent scenes at the World Cup qualifying play-off

SUNA ERDEM in Istanbul

FORMER TURKEY international Ridvan Dilmen was worried when he heard the anger-filled interviews given by players and officials after the national team's 2-0 defeat by Switzerland in Berne in the first leg of their World Cup qualifying play-off. "Oh dear," he said. "We are an easily-provoked nation, and these statements could have bad consequences."

How right he was. Instead of being in the draw for the finals, Turkey are in the dock because of the fracas at the end of the second leg in Istanbul between the home players and officials and the triumphant but scared Swiss, who went through to the finals on away goals having just lost 4-2.

The Turkish and Swiss federations are awaiting the results of one of the largest disciplinary investigations mounted by FIFA, which has opened individual proceedings against Turkey midfielder Emre Belozoglu, defender Alpay Ozalan and assistant coach Mehmet Ozdilek, as well as Swiss player Benjamin Huggel and physiotherapist Stephan Meyer.

The Turks say they were "provoked" by the Swiss players' lightning dash for the changing-rooms after the game, as well as the hostility of the Swiss fans during the tense first leg. They say the media reports of the fracas were exaggerated; the Swiss players say they feared for their lives, and one of them, Stephane Grichting, was taken to hospital after being kicked in the groin.

Privately, Turkish officials say they expect hefty fines and that they may have to play some internationals on neutral grounds, but they believe the nation will escape the biggest threatened punishment of exclusion from the 2010 World Cup. "At the beginning it seemed everything was against us," federation

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president Levent Bicakci said after giving testimony to FIFA. "But right now, I believe we have turned events in our favour."

However, there were certainly no positives to be taken from the events of that Istanbul night in November.

The triumphant "golden generation" that reached the 2002 World Cup semi-finals, many of whom were also part of Galatasaray's 2000 UEFA Cup-winning side under the tutelage of current national team coach Fatih Terim, appear to have morphed into a bunch of paranoid underachievers, their petulance growing in inverse proportion to their success, and it is not a pretty sight.

The aggro in Istanbul was on the cards because the tension and desperation, which had been building since Turkey's chances of direct qualification had begun to fade, was threatening to engulf the squad and Terim following the defeat in Berne four days earlier.

The coach, while acknowledging his players had not performed well in Switzerland, attacked the match officials and the home fans for "unacceptably rude behaviour" – referring to some whistling and obscene chanting, which in hindsight was all rather mild. Terim then gave an extraordinary news conference in which he claimed many people did not want Turkey to qualify and would act to prevent this. "Nobody loves us," was the subtext, "a Turk has no friend other than a Turk" – a tired but standard nationalist, isolationist rant regularly trotted out to explain Turkish failings of any sort.

Self-inflicted pressure

The coach had been under a lot of pressure – some of it, no doubt, self-inflicted. Having been drafted in with three qualifying group games to go, Terim had clearly hoped to build on the messiah status he enjoys in Turkey thanks to his UEFA Cup triumph, his spell in Serie A and the fact that he took the country to their first big finals, Euro 96. It must have hurt that he was not in charge when Turkey romped to the World Cup semi-finals, and now was the chance to show his mettle – yet his team were blowing it.

It was not just Terim upping the ante after the first leg. "If it's dirty they want, we can play dirty," federation board member Davut Disli was quoted as saying in the *Takvim* newspaper.

The Swiss were duly greeted in Istanbul with banners inviting them to hell, pelted with eggs and kept for hours in customs. After the game, with the crowd outraged, the visiting players ran to the tunnel rather than celebrate, Ozdilek – who has since resigned – tried to trip Swiss substitute Valon Behrami, Huggel went to kick Ozdilek, Alpay got involved, and then punches flew in the tunnel.

No one knows exactly what went on down there, partly because, according to the head of DHA news agency, Disli's "men"– unofficial security guards – confiscated the pictures. The Swiss players say Turkish police and officials joined the violence. Who kicked Grichting is still a mystery.

Terim, who was accused in the media of inciting his players to chase down their fleeing rivals, says he has no case to answer. "I'm hurting inside at the kind of questions I was forced to answer," he complained, blaming the media for laying the ground for baseless accusations. All he would say was that the team were fired up as required for a game of such importance, adding: "We did whatever was necessary for the Star and Crescent [the Turkish flag]."

Emre also claimed the media had exaggerated the situation, telling FIFA that the Turkish and Swiss players had even shared jokes at half-time.

However, these attempts at mounting a defence have not received much sympathy, with calls coming for Bicakci and Terim to resign. Some critics have slammed Terim's methods of revving up his players, saying the use of nationalist sentiments is out of order. As for the federation, it reportedly rang television stations to ask them to omit footage of Ozdilek's attempt to trip up Behrami. The stations complied for a while, but it wasn't long before they began to point out the Turks' sorry part in it all.

International prejudice

Yet even while Turks have been forced into self-criticism, they still feel they are up against insurmountable international prejudice. Even the most embarrassed Turk felt the need to raise objections about bias after FIFA president Sepp Blatter – a Swiss – angrily promised, even before the hearings, that his organisation would get tough against Turkey and could even exclude them from the next World Cup.

"I cannot accept that Turkey be singled out as the guilty party," said Deputy Prime Minister Mehmet Ali Sahin, who is responsible for sport in the country. "[Blatter] spoke as a Swiss fan instead of a president."

The Turks might have got somewhere with their claims of biased treatment if their reputation had been less sullied. But their recent past is littered with misdemeanours, both at club and international level and involving fans, players and officials.

So what now? A simple call for those on the terraces to calm down is most unlikely to be enough. Little can be done, either, in the name of good management or to quell violence unless the Turkish game can rid itself of cronyism and the atmosphere of intimidation that has grown since football became a lucrative alternative to political dabblings for mobsters involved in organised crime.

"I don't believe football today is very clean," said Gokmen Ozdemir, deputy sports editor at the *Vatan* newspaper, one of the most critical publications following the play-off. "If you leave a gap, somebody will fill it – in Turkish football there is a gap, and the mafia fills it."

Lengthy rap sheet…Alpay

It is ironic that of all the players in the country it is Alpay Ozalan who has a fair-play award – for not tripping an opponent during a game at Euro 96. His involvement in the fracas after the Switzerland game was far from his first offence. The defender was sent off against Portugal at Euro 2000 and dropped from the national team in 2003 after sparking a fight during a game against England in Istanbul. The latter episode resulted in his sacking from Aston Villa, where there had already been bad blood with team-mates and management. The now Koln player is also in trouble in Germany after being accused of elbowing Hamburg's Guy Demel in the face.

'I'm hurting inside at the kind of questions I was forced to answer'

Turkey coach Terim is indignant at suggestions he encouraged his team to be violent

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Tainted title

Corinthians carried off the trophy but, for many, Internacional were the true champions

BRIAN HOMEWOOD in Rio de Janeiro

CORINTHIANS won the Brazilian championship for the fourth time but this year's title was stained, as Pele put it, by the easy money from the club's dubious deal with Media Sports Investments, stained by the match-fixing scandal involving referee Edilson Pereira de Carvalho and stained by a crucial refereeing mistake in what was effectively the championship decider against eventual runners-up Internacional.

By the end of the campaign, Internacional were very much seen as the good guys, and almost everyone, apart from Corinthians fans, was rooting for them. Inter won support for staying loyal to coach Muricy Ramalho throughout the entire season – a rarity in Brazil (see panel) – for the fact that, unlike Corinthians, they did not win any extra points from matches replayed because of the Carvalho scandal, and because they put their team together with a fraction of Corinthians' multi-million pound budget.

There were many positive aspects to Corinthians' triumph. Argentina forward Carlos Tevez won over the sceptics with his skill, tenacity and dedication to the cause, and for all the talk of big signings, the team featured a number of young, homegrown players such as Coelho, Beto, Rosinei and Jo.

But these plus points were overshadowed by other matters. Many felt that the playing field had been uneven from the moment Corinthians signed their 10-year partnership with MSI last December. The shadowy London-based group immediately began pouring money – of unexplained origin – into the club, who then spent an estimated £30million on new signings. These included Tevez and compatriot Javier Mascherano, who, unfortunately, played only eight (impressive) games before being sidelined by a broken foot.

The ruthless approach of the MSI-backed club quickly became apparent. Even before the championship started, coach Tite

Getting it off his chest…Carlos Tevez is the photographers' target as he salutes Corinthians' championship success despite the final-day defeat at Goias

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resigned when MSI president Kia Joorabchian ordered him to change the penalty taker. Tite was replaced by Daniel Passarella, but the former Argentina captain and coach barely had time to warm his seat before he was kicked out following a 5-1 drubbing by city rivals Sao Paulo.

Next up was Passarella's assistant Marcio Bittencourt, who, having taken charge at a time when none of Brazil's top coaches would have touched the club with a bargepole, turned things around and led Corinthians up the table. His reward, once they had reached the top, was to be unceremoniously ditched in favour of old warhorse Antonio Lopes, who had unceremoniously ditched Atletico Paranaense to take up the new job. (Lopes actually began the tournament with Atletico's arch-rivals Coritiba before crossing town).

Survivor…Paulo Autuori

Nelsinho's dismissal by Santos was one of 37 changes in the Dance of the Coaches, with only Sao Paulo (Paulo Autuori) and Internacional managing to get through their 42 games of competition without a change.

At the other extreme, Sao Caetano (Estevam Soares, Dino Camargo, Levir Culpi, Jair Picerni and Cuca) and Juventude (Ivo Wortmann, Dorival Junior, Valteir Gomes, Sebastiao Lazaroni and Helio dos Anjos) each employed five coaches.

Carvalho replays

The championship reached the two-thirds mark with Internacional one point ahead of Corinthians when Brazil's disciplinary tribunal stepped in. It controversially decided to replay all 11 matches refereed by Carvalho – who has since been banned for life for taking money from a gambling ring to swing results – even though he admitted trying to fix only a couple of them.

It meant that Internacional, whose 3-2 win over Coritiba was refereed by Carvalho, immediately lost three points, putting Corinthians top. As the latter had played in two of Carvalho's matches and lost them both, they were also given the chance to pick up another six points. In the event, they won four – three of them courtesy of a controversial penalty in a 3-2 victory over Santos.

Although Internacional beat Coritiba for a second time to reclaim the points they had lost, the fans will never forget that their side would have been champions had it not been for Corinthians' point gains from the replayed games. The supporters jibed that Corinthians were winners of the "Zveitao" championship, named after the tribunal's president Luiz Zveiter.

Corinthians then benefited from more dubious refereeing as they beat Paysandu 2-0 having been awarded a goal that appeared to be offside, while their opponents had an apparently legitimate goal disallowed.

The crunch came when Corinthians and Internacional met in Sao Paulo in the third from last round. The hosts, by now three points ahead, took the lead when Tevez tapped in his 19th goal of the competition. But Internacional levelled immediately after the break with a superb strike from Rafael Sobis, one of the competition's revelations. Inter took control of the match and with 16 minutes left appeared to have won a penalty when Corinthians goalkeeper Fabio Costa lunged feet first at midfielder Tinga and sent him flying. But referee Marcio Rezende, amid general bewilderment, waved play on and booked Tinga, who, having already picked up a yellow card in the first half, was sent off.

The next day, Rezende, who is in the last year of his career, owned up to his mistake. "I slept very badly. In fact, I didn't sleep," he said. "When I make this sort of mistake I feel ill. I get really irritated and not even my wife can stand me. Today, on the television, I could see that it was a penalty."

The following week, both teams won highly-controversial penalties. Inter converted theirs during a 2-1 win over Palmeiras while Tevez blasted high and wide for Corinthians, who nevertheless beat Ponte Preta 3-1. That left Corinthians still three points clear with one round to go and they clinched the title by that margin despite losing 3-2 at third-placed Goias on the final day as Internacional also lost, 1-0 at Coritiba.

Coritiba down

Coritiba's win was not enough to keep them up, however, joining already-relegated Atletico Mineiro, Paysandu and Brasiliense. Flamengo, who had seemed destined for the drop, miraculously escaped after a run of six wins and three draws in their last nine games.

There was more fun and games at last year's champions Santos, where Nelsinho became the third coach to be deposed since Vanderlei Luxemburgo's departure to Real Madrid last December. Nelsinho, who had negotiated terms while his predecessor Gallo was still in the job, lasted only 12 matches. His swift exit came after a run of six games without a win, which included a 7-1 drubbing by Corinthians and a 4-0 home loss to Internacional.

After the Inter match, Nelsinho blamed it all on Gallo. "The person who was here before me did a horrible job," he complained. "I'm just trying to fix what they did wrong." Gallo retorted: "He was extremely cowardly for not accepting responsibility for the defeats. It's the weapon of the incompetent. He hasn't succeeded in continuing the job I was doing so he's firing at all sides."

Old Santos favourite Serginho Chulapa, the 1982 World Cup forward, was brought back for the last two games. Chulapa has taken over on a caretaker basis on several occasions in the past and was once fired for butting a reporter.

'When I make this sort of mistake I feel ill. On TV I could see it was a penalty'

Referee Marcio Rezende has a crisis of conscience after selling Internacional short against Corinthians

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The winners

Ronaldinho
World Player of the Year
Jose Mourinho
World Manager of the Year
Liverpool
World Team of the Year
Robinho
Young Player of the Year
Pierluigi Collina
Referee of the Year

BARCELONA'S OUTSTANDING Brazilian star Ronaldinho is the undisputed World Player of the Year for 2005 after topping our annual poll. Ronaldinho retains the title he won 12 months ago and in doing so becomes only the third player to win the award in successive seasons, after Michel Platini in 1984 and 1985 and Ronaldo in 1996 and 1997.

Ronaldinho also recorded the fifth biggest share of the vote – almost 39 per cent – in the 24-year history of the award. He received almost three times as many votes as his closest rival, Liverpool captain Steven Gerrard. Chelsea's Frank Lampard finished third.

This year's voting confirmed Spain, England and Italy as the world's foremost leagues, with four players from La Liga, three from the Premiership and three from Serie A in the top 10.

Jose Mourinho retained the Manager award, the first time that has been achieved, edging out Liverpool's Rafa Benitez after leading Chelsea to their first League title for 50 years. However, Liverpool won the Team award on the strength of their Champions League triumph. Barcelona's Frank Rijkaard and Fabio Capello of Juventus came third and fourth respectively in the Manager list following title wins with their clubs.

National coaches Marco Van Basten (Holland), Guus Hiddink (Australia), Stephen Keshi (Togo) and Carlos Alberto Parreira (Brazil) also made the top 10.

'Ronaldinho received almost three times as many votes as his closest rival, Steven Gerrard'

There were two new awards this year. Brazilian starlet Robinho won a close race with England forward Wayne Rooney for the Young Player prize. Barcelona teenager Lionel Messi came third.

Italian Pierluigi Collina was the clear winner of the Referee award, even though he hung up his whistle earlier this year. Dane Kim Milton Nielsen was second, with German Markus Merk third.

Votes were received from 52 different countries – including Ghana, Malaysia, Finland, Japan and Bermuda – proving once again that the *World Soccer* awards continue to reach the parts other awards cannot reach.

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PREVIOUS WINNERS

WORLD PLAYER OF THE YEAR

		% of votes
1	Ronaldinho (Barcelona & Brazil)	38.9
2	Steven Gerrard (Liverpool & England)	13.4
3	Frank Lampard (Chelsea & England)	12.6
4	Adriano (Internazionale & Brazil)	5.1
5	Andrii Shevchenko (Milan & Ukraine)	4.6
6	Juan Roman Riquelme (Villarreal & Argentina)	4.4
7	Thierry Henry (Arsenal & France)	3.6
8	Kaka (Milan & Brazil)	2.8
9	Samuel Eto'o (Barcelona & Cameroon)	2.6
10	Deco (Barcelona & Portugal)	1.5
	Others	10.5

WORLD MANAGER OF THE YEAR

		% of votes
1	Jose Mourinho (Chelsea)	34.1
2	Rafael Benitez (Liverpool)	31.1
3	Frank Rijkaard (Barcelona)	8.5
4	Fabio Capello (Juventus)	6.6
5	Marco Van Basten (Holland)	2.5
6	Guus Hiddink (PSV & Australia)	1.6
7	Stephen Keshi (Togo)	1.4
8	Manuel Luis Pellegrini (Villarreal)	1.1
9	Carlos Alberto Parreira (Brazil)	0.9
10	Martin Jol (Tottenham)	0.8
	Others	11.4

WORLD TEAM OF THE YEAR

		% of votes
1	Liverpool	26.7
2	Chelsea	21.1
3	Barcelona	17.7
4	Brazil	10.4
5	Villarreal	3.5
6	Lyon	3.4
7	Juventus	2.8
8	Milan	2.5
9	Ukraine	2.4
10	Togo	2.0
	Others	7.5

YOUNG PLAYER OF THE YEAR

		% of votes
1	Robinho (Santos/Real Madrid & Brazil)	29.5
2	Wayne Rooney (Manchester United & England)	28.0
3	Lionel Messi (Barcelona & Argentina)	19.8
4	Cristiano Ronaldo (Manchester United & Portugal)	5.9
5	Cesc Fabregas (Arsenal & Spain)	2.0
6	Arjen Robben (Chelsea & Holland)	1.2
7	Cicinho (Sao Paulo & Brazil)	1.1
8	Freddy Adu (DC United & United States)	0.9
9	Robin Van Persie (Arsenal & Holland)	0.8
10	Giovanni Dos Santos (Barcelona & Mexico)	0.7
	Others	10.1

REFEREE OF THE YEAR

		% of votes
1	Pierluigi Collina (Italy)	30.6
2	Kim Milton Nielsen (Denmark)	19.7
3	Markus Merk (Germany)	16.3
4	Anders Frisk (Sweden)	10.2
5	Lubos Michel (Slovakia)	6.1
6	Terje Hauge (Norway)	3.4
7	Manuel Enrique Mejuto Gonzalez (Spain)	2.7
8	Graham Poll (England)	2.0
9	Rob Styles (England)	1.3
10	Brian Hall (United States)	0.6
	Others	7.1

WORLD PLAYER

		% of votes
1982	Paolo Rossi (Juventus & Italy)	23
1983	Zico (Udinese & Brazil)	28
1984	Michel Platini (Juventus & France)	54
1985	Michel Platini (Juventus & France)	21
1986	Diego Maradona (Napoli & Argentina)	36
1987	Ruud Gullit (Milan & Holland)	39
1988	Marco Van Basten (Milan & Holland)	43
1989	Ruud Gullit (Milan & Holland)	24
1990	Lothar Matthaus (Inter & West Germany)	22
1991	Jean-Pierre Papin (Marseille & France)	25
1992	Marco Van Basten (Milan & Holland)	19
1993	Roberto Baggio (Juventus & Italy)	14
1994	Paolo Maldini (Milan & Italy)	27
1995	Gianluca Vialli (Juventus & Italy)	18
1996	Ronaldo (Barcelona & Brazil)	17
1997	Ronaldo (Barcelona/Internazionale & Brazil)	27
1998	Zinedine Zidane (Juventus & France)	23
1999	Rivaldo (Barcelona & Brazil)	42
2000	Luis Figo (Barcelona/Real Madrid & Portugal)	26
2001	Michael Owen (Liverpool & England)	31
2002	Ronaldo (Inter/Real Madrid & Brazil)	26
2003	Pavel Nedved (Juventus & Czech Republic)	36
2004	Ronaldinho (Barcelona & Brazil)	29

WORLD MANAGER

		% of votes
1982	Enzo Bearzot (Italy)	49
1983	Sepp Piontek (Denmark)	29
1984	Michel Hidalgo (France)	30
1985	Terry Venables (Barcelona)	30
1986	Guy Thys (Belgium)	15
1987	Johan Cruyff (Ajax)	25
1988	Rinus Michels (Holland/Bayer Leverkusen)	48
1989	Arrigo Sacchi (Milan)	42
1990	Franz Beckenbauer (West Germany)	53
1991	Michel Platini (France)	42
1992	Richard Moller Nielsen (Denmark)	28
1993	Alex Ferguson (Manchester United)	21
1994	Carlos Alberto Parreira (Brazil)	17
1995	Louis Van Gaal (Ajax)	42
1996	Berti Vogts (Germany)	28
1997	Ottmar Hitzfeld (Borussia Dortmund)	17
1998	Arsene Wenger (Arsenal)	28
1999	Alex Ferguson (Manchester United)	60
2000	Dino Zoff (Italy)	18
2001	Gerard Houllier (Liverpool)	28
2002	Guus Hiddink (South Korea)	28
2003	Carlo Ancelotti (Milan)	20
2004	Jose Mourinho (FC Porto/Chelsea)	36

WORLD TEAM

		% of votes
1982	Brazil	30
1983	Hamburg	29
1984	France	45
1985	Everton	42
1986	Argentina	15
1987	FC Porto	38
1988	Holland	43
1989	Milan	51
1990	West Germany	28
1991	France	20
1992	Denmark	37
1993	Parma	24
1994	Milan	33
1995	Ajax	50
1996	Nigeria	31
1997	Borussia Dortmund	20
1998	France	35
1999	Manchester United	61
2000	France	33
2001	Liverpool	26
2002	Brazil	24
2003	Milan	23
2004	Greece	25

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Ronaldinho

World Player of the Year 2005

Fantasy for real

If Ronaldinho carries on as he is, we will soon be putting him among the all-time greats, says Sid Lowe

A LITTLE WHILE back, I received an e-mail with an internet link and the simple message: "The most amazing thing ever." The link takes you to footage that has just been used for an advert. In it, Ronaldinho ambles over to the corner of the penalty area at Camp Nou, where a man with a small metallic suitcase awaits. In the background, the Brazilian's team-mates are training, knocking a ball about among themselves, as he opens the case and pulls out a pair of gold-encrusted boots.

Ronaldinho thanks the man, laces up his new boots, flicks a football into the air and starts playing keepie-uppie. The footage is silent except for the soft sound of him gently tapping at the ball, not once allowing it to drop.

Strolling around the edge of the penalty area, tracing the white line to the middle, the ball still in the air, he volleys it towards goal. The ball strikes the bar and comes straight back to him. He controls it on his chest, swivels and volleys it goalwards. Again, it hits the bar and travels in a long, true arc straight back to him, where he controls it again and, still without letting it drop, hammers it goalwards for a third time. And, for a third time, it thuds back off the bar and sails straight back to him.

'The Brazilian has got people used to seeing skills they could never have imagined'

Ludicrous hat-trick completed, and completed so coolly you'd think he did it every day of the week, Ronaldinho retraces his steps back to the man with the case, still not letting the ball drop. He sits down, takes off his boots, pops them back in the case, nods his approval and smiles that smile: yeah, not bad. Not bad? It is, as the e-mail says, the most amazing thing ever.

It is also a fake, a montage. It has to be. Doesn't it? The friend who sent it reckoned the footage was genuine, others that it wasn't, it couldn't possibly be. Could it?

And that's the point, the measure of Ronaldinho's brilliance. That it was something you vowed to get to the bottom of rather than simply dismissing spoke volumes. The very fact that anyone could even begin to believe that such an incredible and utterly nonchalant demonstration of skill could be genuine is telling – and only with Ronaldinho would they begin to believe it.

The Brazilian has got people used to seeing things they have never seen before, skills they could never have imagined, flicks they never contemplated and can't understand. Now it seems right. Now that they know him, would anyone dare accuse him of a fluke if he scored that goal against England again? Of course not.

Ronaldinho has broken the rules. He is a cartoon character, a caricature even. A Playstation player. Plain silly. It might not be pushing it to say we have never seen anything like it – a player with such a range of skills and talent, and so effective with it. Sure, there have been tricksters – Deportivo La Coruna's incredible Brazilian Djalminha springs to mind – and players with special talents, but not like this. Ronaldinho is different; carry on as he is, add another World Cup and the European Cup to his sumptuous skills, consummate his talent, and we may well be talking about one of the all-time greats.

There may have been others who deserved *World Soccer's* Player of the Year award ahead of him in terms of their impact and performance over the past year – Samuel Eto'o, Steven Gerrard, Frank Lampard and Paolo Maldini could all lay strong claims – but none could match the sheer wow factor of Ronaldinho. The utter brilliance. The wonder and fun. "Ronaldinho," Franz Beckenbauer said, "is art in its purest form."

But there is more to it than that. Rejected by Real Madrid, the Brazilian proved the catalyst for Barcelona's recovery, a leader as well as a fantasy footballer. A man with a wonderful, childlike enthusiasm for football yet the power of a gym-obsessive. As one former Madrid player put it: "He's an amazing athlete, so strong and quick. He'd be brilliant even without the flicks and tricks."

And yet it is the flicks, the skills, the sheer jaw-dropping madness of it all that really make Ronaldinho so different. The cow's tail, as the Spanish call it, where he spins 360 degrees with the ball on his toe, pulling it across the turf beyond his man, not playing it. The back-heels, stepovers and devastatingly quick feet. The passes without looking, the passes with his back, for goodness sake. He even manages to make penalties look special, sending them screaming, bending into the corner before the keeper has moved.

It all works, too. It is showy but not just for show. In Ronaldinho's first season at Barca, the team defeated Madrid at the Bernabeu thanks to his awesome scooped pass to Xavi, he scored two candidates for Champions League goal of the season last term – against Milan and Chelsea – and his first ever goal for Barcelona, against Sevilla, went thundering in off the underside of the bar after a 50-yard run. At 1.20 in the morning.

And recently there was the glorious peak, in Barcelona's 3-0 win at the Bernabeu, the proof that sometimes footballing genius conquers all; two goals so good that he earned a standing ovation from the Real Madrid fans. The last man to be handed that honour was a certain Diego Armando Maradona.

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THE REST OF THE TOP 10

2 Steven Gerrard
Liverpool & England
An inspirational figure as Liverpool's captain in their Champions League Final triumph in Istanbul. Praised for sticking with his hometown club last summer.
Position last year: not in top 10.

3 Frank Lampard
Chelsea & England
Called the best in the world by Chelsea manager Jose Mourinho and admired by many others for his professionalism.
Last year: 8th.

4 Adriano
Internazionale & Brazil
Has arguably displaced Ronaldo as the first-choice striker in the Brazilian national team. Another trophyless season in Italy will inevitably raise speculation about a transfer to Spain or England next summer.
Last year: 7th.

5 Andrii Shevchenko
Milan & Ukraine
Missed the crucial penalty in the Champions League Final shoot-out, but was instrumental in Ukraine qualifying for the World Cup, their first major finals.
Last year: 3rd.

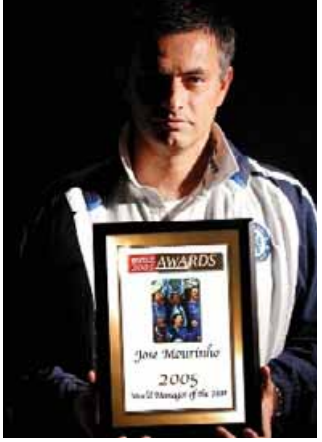
6 Juan Roman Riquelme
Villarreal & Argentina
Has put two frustrating seasons at Barcelona well and truly behind him with a series of breathtaking displays for Villarreal. Now also at the heart of the Argentina team.
Last year: not in top 10.

7 Thierry Henry
Arsenal & France
ESM Golden Shoe winner for a second straight season. Continues to break records for Arsenal, but refuses to be drawn on the possibility of a summer transfer to Barcelona.
Last year: 2nd.

8 Kaka
Milan & Brazil
The third member of Brazil's Magic Quartet of attackers to make it into the top 10. Brilliant but ultimately unsuccessful in the Champions League Final.
Last year: not in top 10.

9 Samuel Eto'o
Barcelona & Cameroon
The reigning African Footballer of the Year, Spanish League winner with Barcelona and, for Real Madrid, another one who got away.
Last year: not in top 10.

10 Deco
Barcelona & Portugal
A crucial, if sometimes overlooked, member of Barca's League-winning side.
Last year: 4th.



Jose Mourinho
Manager of the Year 2005

Magnetic force

The Chelsea boss is a fascinating character as well as being highly successful

JOSE MOURINHO'S handshake is unsettling. It's not the bone-cruncher you might expect from the self-styled Special One. In fact, it's gentle, the imprint of a man at peace with himself and the world, with no need to impress.

It's all very different to the Portuguese's public persona, the tough guy who would pick a fight with his grandmother if it gave his team the edge.

Mourinho's public battles over the past year – with Barcelona, UEFA, Arsene Wenger – have won him acclaim and disdain in equal measure. For the media, he has been a godsend, an endless source of fascinating opinions and original quotes.

It's been a high-risk strategy that has brought the coach into conflict with high-profile figures throughout European football. But, crucially, the magnetism of Mourinho – whether for praise or criticism – has deflected the pressure away from his players.

Mourinho found success in his first season with Chelsea – winning the Premier League title and League Cup and reaching the Champions League semi-finals. And, after winning the *World Soccer* award last year for his exploits with Porto, he is now the first manager to take it in successive seasons.

He acknowledges there were a number of contenders for this year's award. "I won the Premiership, Benitez won the Champions League, Rijkaard won the Spanish League, so it was different to last year, when I was with Porto.

"I respect a lot of different coaches. Of course, people look more to me, to Ancelotti, to Capello, to Rijkaard, to the managers of the big clubs and the trophies we have. I have to say I feel sorry Paul Le Guen is not working because he did a fantastic job at Lyon and I look forward to having him back in the game because I like him a lot."

On the qualities needed to be a good coach, Mourinho says: "If you are a very good leader this is very important but it is not enough. It is also about training methodology, it is about reading the game. I am a hard worker, I study a lot because I don't want to stop where I am now, I have a lot of ambition and I think I can pull people with me, bring them in my direction."

Gavin Hamilton

'He is the first manager to win the award in successive seasons'

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Liverpool
Team of the Year 2005

Comeback kings

Benitez's boys came to life when they'd looked dead and buried

LIVERPOOL OWE THEIR status as Team of the Year to the ultimate game of two halves.

At half-time in Istanbul the outcome of the 2005 Champions League Final appeared set in concrete. Milan were leading 3-0 and playing superbly; Liverpool appeared on the brink of humiliation.

Deep in the bowels of the stadium, however, the sounds of celebrating Milan players stirred the Liverpool resolve. Manager Rafa Benitez took advantage of the injury to Steve Finnan to bring the ultimately decisive Didi Hamann (pictured top, with Benitez) into midfield.

'At half-time, the sounds of celebrating Milan players stirred the Liverpool resolve'

Three goals in 14 minutes from the magnificent Steven Gerrard, Vladimir Smicer, in his last game for the club, and Xabi Alonso brought Liverpool level before the reflexes of Jerzy Dudek allowed them to cling on in extra-time then win the shoot-out.

This was the sort of life and death football Bill Shankly would have appreciated. He set Liverpool on the road to revival in the 1960s, and although he had retired before they won the Champions Cup for the first time in 1977, he created the hurricane spirit that swept through Europe.

In the years up to the full stop wrought by the Heysel disaster in 1985, Liverpool won the Champions Cup four times: as many as the other English winners – Manchester United, Nottingham Forest and Aston Villa – had won between them.

But it took a decade for Liverpool to regain their footing in continental football once the post-Heysel ban was lifted. Then, under Frenchman Gerard Houllier, they carried off a clean sweep of five cups in 2001, including the UEFA Cup.

It proved a false dawn, however. Liverpool failed to move forward in the Premiership and so, last year, chairman David Moores took advantage of a boardroom rift at Spanish champions Valencia to lure Benitez away.

The Kop remained patient despite early signs that not all Benitez's Spanish imports were Premiership-friendly. Winning the League was not a realistic immediate target but, in any case, Benitez appears more at home at continental level. He found the frenetic pace of the Premiership a hindrance in trying to come to terms with both English football and the English language.

Benitez revealed that he played Beatles CDs in his car to assist his efforts to learn English. It paid off. Instead of *You'll Never Walk Alone*, the Kop might well have sung: "We love you – yeah, yeah, yeah…"

Keir Radnedge

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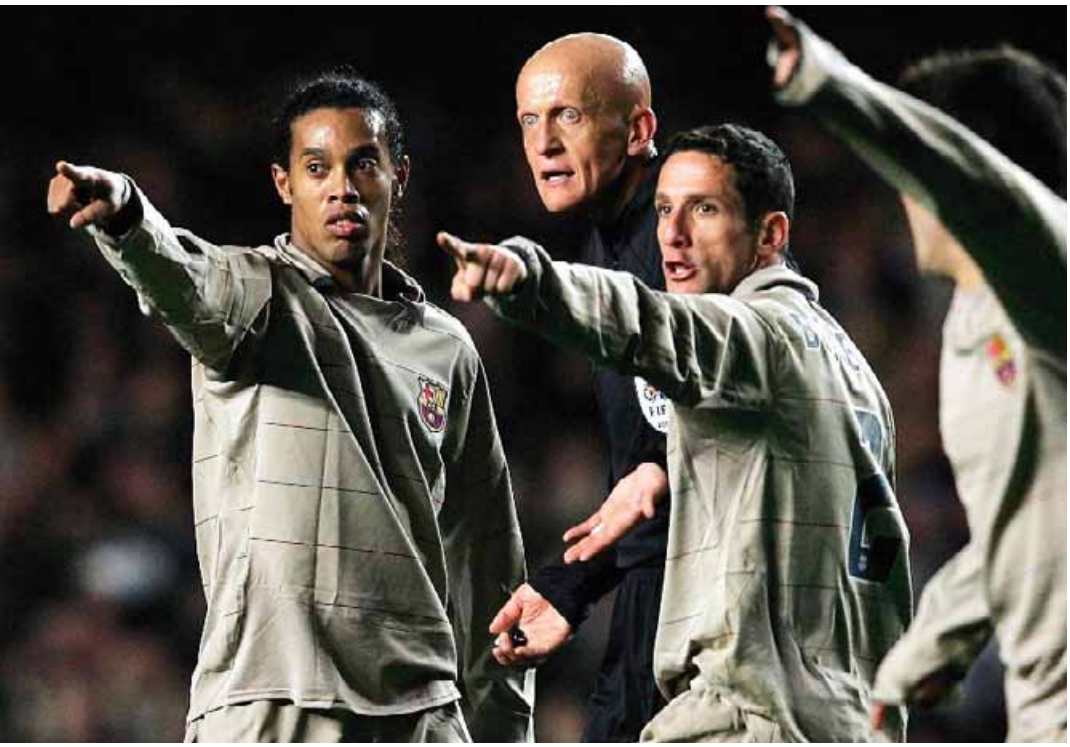
Pierluigi Collina
Referee of the Year 2005

Authority figure

The Italian has hung up his whistle, but we haven't heard the last of him



PIERLUIGI COLLINA turns heads. Even in a fashionable London hotel, a world away from the football pitches of Serie A, he is recognised. Whether the Italian likes it or not, he is now one of the most recognisable men on the planet.

As he collects his award from *World Soccer*, he does not seem bothered by all the attention, but nor does he seem ready to melt away into the background.

Yet the man who exuded authority as a referee seems less certain about where his life after football will take him. "I'm not sure what the future holds," he admits. "I have not made a decision yet."

It is over three months since a messy sponsorship row led to Collina definitively hanging up his whistle after a 28-year career, but the world's best-known and most respected match official continues to make headlines. Last month, he unveiled the identity of his favourite club.

"Now that I'm no longer a referee, I can tell you that I support Lazio," said the 45-year-old in a speech to medical students in Parma. "As a little boy, I followed Bologna, but then I warmed to Lazio. Yet in the first 10 Lazio games I took charge of, they didn't win one."

Inevitably, Collina's "admission" brought out the conspiracy-theory tendency in every Serie A watcher. Italian fans like nothing more than to pontificate about less-than-impartial refereeing. Now they could say: "I told you so."

Collina, the referee of the 1999 Champions League Final and 2002 World Cup Final, reacted with surprise to the stir caused by his Lazio revelation. "I don't understand all the fuss. There's nothing bad in it. Nobody involved in football comes from Mars. Everyone has a team dear to them."

The Italian federation changed the maximum age for Serie A referees from 45 to 46 specifically to give Collina another 12 months at the top, so this season should have been a glorious swansong. But that all changed in early August when *Gazzetta Dello Sport* revealed that he had signed a lucrative three-year sponsorship deal – rumoured to be worth £540,000 per annum – with car manufacturer Opel, the shirt sponsors of Milan.

The potential conflict of interest was clear cut, federation president Franco Carraro agreed, and Collina was told to sever his links with Opel or officiate only Serie B games. He did neither, opting instead to resign from the Italian Referees' Association. "Without trust in me I could not go on," he declared.

A sad exit for the most accomplished FIFA referee of his generation. But we have not heard – nor seen – the last of Pierluigi Collina.

Gavin Hamilton

'Whether he likes it or not, he is one of the most recognisable men on the planet'

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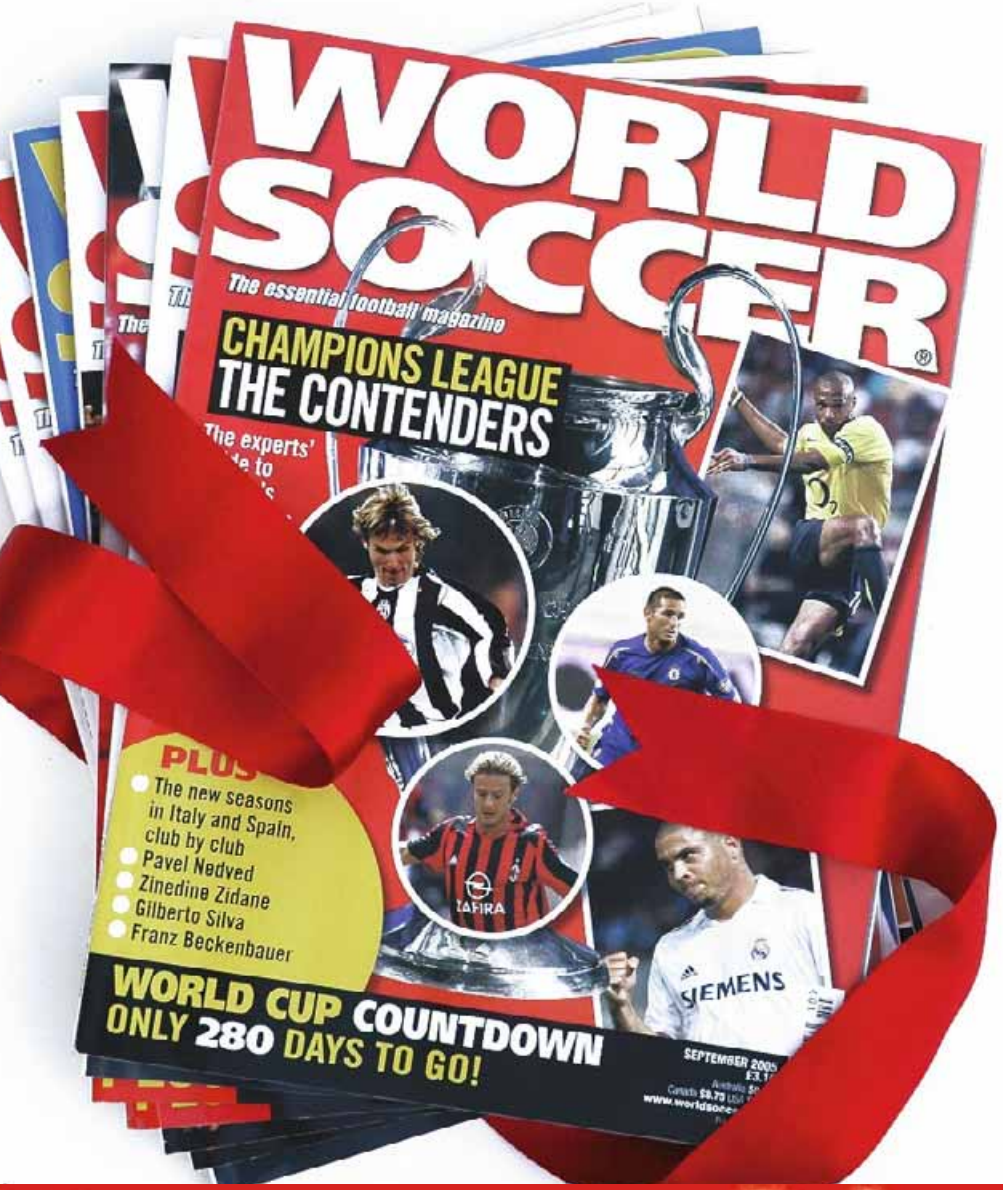

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MAIN MEN

Zlatan Ibrahimovic

Maverick Juventus striker boosting Swedish hopes of success

WHAT DOES A Swedish MEP do when he wants to get noticed in an economic debate at the European Parliament in Strasbourg? Keen to stress that the best theories are not always the most practical, he naturally uses his country's fast-rising star striker Zlatan Ibrahimovic to make his point.

"It might be tempting to pick 11 Ibrahimovics in your side, to have 11 great attackers on the pitch," Green MEP Carl Schlyter told the assembly recently. "On paper it looks good, but ultimately you will not have a winning team."

Schlyter was, of course, right. A side entirely composed of extravagantly-gifted, maverick strikers would be doomed. However, just one Ibrahimovic is enough to give Sweden a good chance of going far at the World Cup.

National coach Lars Lagerback has several other attacking weapons in the armoury – the thrust on the flanks of Freddie Ljungberg and Christian Wilhelmsson, the incisive passing of Anders Svensson and Kim Kallstrom, and the eye for goal of the predatory Henrik Larsson. But Ibrahimovic's talents make him by far the most dangerous.

The 24-year-old Juventus star has proved himself a guaranteed source of international goals, scoring eight in the World Cup qualifiers to give him a healthy tally of 18 from 36 games. But, arguably, he is even more accomplished as a maker of chances, posing often insurmountable problems to defences with his mobility, extraordinary skills and sheer unpredictability. Ibrahimovic was the only logical choice as Sweden's Player of the Year for 2005 and sure enough he won it.

'He is like Cantona, able to work magic free of constraints'

Michel Platini

The forward, born in Malmo to a Croat mother and Bosnian father, certainly made a wise decision when he quit Ajax for Juve in a £9million deal at the start of last season. In terms of intensity and competitiveness Serie A is light years away from the Dutch League, and the Swede has found the perfect tutor in Juve coach Fabio Capello. Showboating was proscribed, quick, direct attacking forays were encouraged. And to what sensational effect.

"I can visualise Ibrahimovic making quite an impact at the World Cup," says former Juventus great Michel Platini. "He has it all. He's big and strong and can look after himself, but on the other hand, he's a genuine football artist. He reminds me of Eric Cantona, someone who can come deep and work some magic free of tactical constraints."

The only question is whether "Ibra" will remain on the pitch for the full 90 minutes in Germany. He has proved quick to retaliate if he feels a defender has overstepped the mark and his hair-trigger temperament is bound to be tested by unscrupulous opponents.

"My impulsiveness is a fault that I must cut out, but it's how I am," says Ibrahimovic. "It's down to my character and the position I play. Markers try every trick in the book to stop me."

Sweden emerged as one of the surprise sides at the 1974 World Cup finals in West Germany thanks in no small part to the four goals of gangling striker Ralf Edstrom. Ibrahimovic could easily do better this time round.

Nick Bidwell

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Niko Kovac

High-energy Croatia captain who will find the finals a home from home

CAPTAIN NIKO KOVAC, a deep-lying central midfielder bristling with boundless energy, grit and sound tactical instincts, is the embodiment of the current Croatia side – nothing fancy but highly effective.

Long gone are the days when the team were synonymous with free-flowing football, when the inventive attacking skills of Zvonimir Boban, Robert Prosinecki and Davor Suker carried them to the last eight of Euro 96 and third place at France 98.

The Croatia side that went unbeaten on the road to World Cup 2006 are more renowned for their athleticism, esprit de corps and defensive solidity – only five goals conceded in 10 qualifiers – than any sense of romanticism.

"You just can't compare the side of 2005 with the one that made history at the 1998 World Cup," says 34-year-old Kovac. "In 1998 we had a number of tremendous individuals capable of winning a match with one moment of magic. Unfortunately, such talents don't come along every day.

"It's a cliche but right now the team is the star. We're a very close-knit squad, everyone respects everyone else, and while we're not short of technical ability, we do know how to scrap from first minute to last. This is the spirit that enabled us to top our qualifying group. We had our bad moments, especially only drawing in Malta [1-1]. But when it really mattered, we came through, winning home and away against a good Swedish side."

Kovac plays his club football for Hertha Berlin, his hometown club since he was born in the German capital, as was younger brother Robert, the Juventus centre-back, to Croat parents.

"Our team is for the most part made up of overseas-based players but you would find it difficult to find a more patriotic, motivated group," Kovac asserts. "Wearing the red-and-white checked shirt is, as far as we are concerned, the greatest possible honour. We have to be worthy of it. Neither my brother Robert nor I were born in Croatia. But the love of the land of our forefathers is in our blood."

Croatia were in desperate need of a fillip after being eliminated at the first round stage at Euro 2004. It was provided, according to Kovac, by the decision to replace discredited coach Otto Baric with ex-Dinamo Zagreb boss Zlatko Kranjcar.

"He has been like a breath of fresh air," says Kovac. "He understands that no national team can achieve results without good organisation, yet does not make the mistake of setting us up too defensively. He encourages us to take the initiative. I feel we're much more enterprising than we once were."

Kovac has spent 14 years in the Bundesliga with Hertha, Bayern Munich, Hamburg and Bayer Leverkusen, and is one of a number of Croatia's first-teamers to play or have played in the German top division. The veteran believes the connection could prove highly beneficial next summer.

"With many of our squad playing their club football in Germany, we should feel completely at home and we're bound to have great support from the many Croats who live and work here," Kovac argues. "We can do well but we have to be consistent. In previous tournaments we've mixed good games – a win over Italy or a draw with France – with disappointing performances. It should be a wonderful occasion in Germany and doubly so with myself leading out the team at stadia I know very well."

Nick Bidwell

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MAIN MEN

Fabio Cannavaro

Italy's captain proves there's no substitute for experience

IF YOU ASK Giovanni Trapattoni why his Italy side lost to South Korea in that dramatic World Cup game in 2002, you might not get the answer you expect. While millions of his compatriots would point to the eccentric refereeing of Ecuadorean Byron Moreno, the veteran coach recently commented: "We were without both Cannavaro and Nesta that day."

As Italy prepare for the Germany finals, not much seems to have changed with regard to their defensive strength – or rather the lack of back-up should anything befall the Big Two. Like Trapattoni before him, current Italy coach Marcello Lippi must pray to the gods that nothing goes wrong with either his captain, Fabio Cannavaro, or his central defensive partner Alessandro Nesta. Even though stand-bys such as Daniele Bonera, Marco Materazzi and Andrea Barzagli are adequate in the role, they have nothing like the quality and experience of the first-choice pairing.

By the time of the 2010 World Cup, Nesta will be 34 and could still be in contention for a team place. But for Cannavaro, already 32, Germany 2006 represents the last chance to win something with the national team.

The Juventus man is the first to admit that his generation of Italian internationals have delivered less than their potential, most notably in that dramatic last-gasp Euro 2000 Final loss to France.

"In Rotterdam, we didn't do what Italians are good at; we should have been a bit more canny, a bit more expert at handling the situation we were in," Cannavaro says. "If you look at the late equaliser that we conceded [to Sylvain Wiltord, which sent the game to extra-time], it was a whole chain of errors. First, one of our strikers gave away the ball, then Iuliano got beaten to a ball by Trezeguet, then my headed clearance was not good, then the ball went under Nesta's legs, and finally Toldo did not get back in time to stop it. Mind you, we were tired and we just lacked lucidity at the vital moment."

'Perhaps only Brazil will have more firepower than us'

Since then, of course, Italy have disappointed again, at both the 2002 World Cup and Euro 2004. But Cannavaro, capped 90 times, believes that Lippi's new-look Italy will be serious contenders in Germany, making up in collective teamwork for what they lack in traditional Italian quality.

"We will start off with as good a chance as any side," the centre-back said after the recent 3-1 friendly win against Holland. "Perhaps only Brazil have more firepower than us, but I'm convinced this team will leave its mark. For one thing, for many of us this will be our last chance. We're a team that has grown up together and we go to the World Cup with high expectations."

Cannavaro was a youth team player at Napoli in the halcyon days of Diego Maradona, but his first-class career began in the 1992-93 season, long after the Little Big Man had left Italian soccer. Having just missed out on Napoli's title-winning days, Cannavaro had to wait until last season to finally win his first League title, in Juve's colours. It took him 12 seasons to win the *scudetto*. Could it be that, at the third time of asking, he will win a World Cup winner's medal?

Stranger things have happened.

Paddy Agnew

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Mark Viduka

'Beating Uruguay was a big, big win. It has given us a new inner confidence'

Socceroo captain flying the flag for Aussies with Croat roots

MARK VIDUKA'S FAMILY roots may be in Croatia, but he's a regular Aussie. Many's the Australian who will tell of the day he met the national team captain while wearing a shirt of one of his clubs – Celtic or Leeds or Middlesbrough – and how the talk turned to home and the drinks were shared.

Viduka intends to enjoy the World Cup finals. Australia have not been there since 1974, a year before the forward was born. Until now his relationship with the finals has been painful, having been part of the team that lost to Uruguay in the qualifying play-off for the 2002 finals. That defeat has now been well and truly avenged.

Viduka was brought up in St Albans near Melbourne, but always knew his roots lay elsewhere. Parents Joseph and Anna Rose had fled Yugoslavia separately in the early 1960s and talked wistfully of home. It meant little to the young Viduka, especially when he was chosen to captain Australia's Under-20s cricket team, but history caught up fast in 1994.

By now his fame as a footballer with Melbourne Knights (formerly Melbourne Croatia) had outstripped his reputation as a cricketer. At 19, three years after Croatia seized independence, Viduka was summoned to a meeting in Melbourne with visiting state president Franjo Tudjman.

Tudjman had renamed Dinamo Zagreb, his favourite club, Croatia Zagreb and – at the prompting of national coach Miroslav Blazevic – considered Viduka an ideal spearhead for the outfit and a possible successor to Davor Suker in the national team. Well, Viduka did join Croatia Zagreb, where he stayed for three years, but in the country itself he discovered a chasm between second-hand memories and first-hand reality. Later he said: "Fifty years of communism had left its mark. There was a lot of pessimism and extremism. Everything was either wonderful or awful. Nothing in between."

Viduka's status suffered with the fading popularity of Tudjman. He was The President's Man and an easy target for political unrest whether he played well or badly, scored goals or missed them.

Celtic offered a way out, and from there it was on to Leeds, and now Middlesbrough.

Australia and the Socceroos had always stood in the background since Viduka had not entered the Croatian national team set-up, but contact between association and player was initially fractured and results disappointing. Not until coach Frank Farina decided to set up a Europe-based operation did hope and ambition finally begin to set in. The World Cup qualifying failure in 2001 was a setback, but everything suddenly changed for the better. A new regime took over the association, Guus Hiddink was hired as national coach…and Uruguay were overcome in the play-off for 2006.

"That was a big, big win," says Viduka. "It has given us a new inner confidence. Look what Guus Hiddink did with South Korea. We'll have four weeks clear to prepare for the finals and we're going to be flying. We've also proved players of Croat origin can achieve their ambitions of playing at the highest level with Australia. We've lost too many good players that way. Hopefully, not any more."

Viduka, of course, considers himself living proof.

Keir Radnedge

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THE STADIUMS

Teething troubles…the Waldstadion roof is winched into place before the Confederations Cup Final – but a leak caused rain to flood a corner of the pitch

Something for a rainy day

FRANKFURT'S REBUILT WALDSTADION has a retractable roof, a translucent umbrella of high-tech fabric that can be opened or closed in 15 minutes, so the pitch will never flood.

Well, at least that's the theory. There have been some teething problems. The roof was put to the test during last summer's Confederations Cup Final between Brazil and Argentina – played during a thunderstorm – and a leak caused a large puddle to form near a corner flag.

A bit embarrassing when you have the headquarters of both the German football federation and World Cup organising committee just around the corner – and it must have brought memories flooding back of the last time Germany staged the finals in 1974. Then, the hosts' final second group stage game against Poland at the Waldstadion came within a whisker of being postponed when a massive downpour shortly before kick-off turned the pitch into a paddling pool.

This time round, though, the engineers will have had nearly a year to sort out the problems by the time the World Cup starts, and all should stay dry, regardless of the weather. "We have the biggest convertible in the world," says Frankfurt mayor Achim Vandreiecke.

The 1974 Waldstadion was a 61,000-capacity bowl with an athletics track, two covered stands and open terraces at either end. That could never fit the bill as a 2006 venue, so the ground was razed and in its place sprang up an £88million stadium, designed by Berlin architects Von Gerkan and Marg.

They have bequeathed to the tournament – and of course, resident club Eintracht – a superb two-tier oval providing 43,324 spectators with all mod cons.

Nick Bidwell

Moveable feast

THE ARENA AUFSCHALKE is all things to all men. Some like it for its modernity, its sliding roof, state-of-the-art sound system, video cubes, moveable pitch and avant-garde architecture which stands in marked contrast to the utterly unpretentious Ruhr region of western Germany, where coal mines and steelworks used to proliferate until economic recession took hold at the tail-end of the last century.

Others appreciate its multi-functional character, its suitability for hosting conventions, parties, exhibitions, operas, pop concerts and a host of sporting events, ranging from biathlons to American football.

But above all, the £137million Arena, which opened in 2001, is a wonderful place to watch football, a ground in which everyone present – 48,500 in its all-seater World Cup guise but 61,000 in its partially-terraced configuration for domestic games – feels close to the action and where a rip-roaring atmosphere is easily stoked.

While Schalke's old home, the Parkstadion, could cram in more people – 70,000 – even its most die-hard devotees would have to admit that progress is not always a dirty word. The Parkstadion was cold and impersonal, offering no protection from the elements on three sides; the Arena is a stadium fit for the 21st century.

Gelsenkirchen, a conurbation of just 280,000, may not possess the glitz and glamour of certain big German cities. However, it is a real football town in every sense.

Nick Bidwell

Home from home…the Arena AufSchalke

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Brazilian's blend

Milan's young playmaker picks his World XI

I AM LUCKY enough to play with the same keeper in my national team as my club, **Dida**. With him I feel confident, and both teams, Brazil and Milan, have complete faith in his quality.

On the right side of defence, it has to be **Cafu**. He's probably been the best right-back over the past decade and longer. A lot of younger players would like to be as fast as he is now at 35. His cleverness and coolness are just as impressive.

The centre-backs would be **Paolo Maldini** and **Franco Baresi**, both legendary players of Milan and born champions. Maldini is one of the all-time greats in his position, maybe even the best ever. I always admired Baresi because of his elegance and the intelligent way he played.

The left-back would be **Serginho**, my mate at Milan, as you always need a friend in your team. But he is not only a friend, he loves football and his passion for sport is outstanding.

My defensive midfielder would be **Dunga**, captain of the Brazil team at the 1994 World Cup and a player who represented power and strength on the pitch like no other.

Zinedine Zidane has to be my creative midfielder. He has maintained his unbelievable standard for more then 10 years, and that is amazing for a midfielder. Many people are saying he is getting old now. I just say, let's wait for the World Cup, Zidane still has a lot to show. As you can imagine, he is one of my favourite players.

As for **me**, I would be in left midfield or just next to Zidane.

I would choose **Rai** for the right of midfield. He was a great example to me when I was at Sao Paulo. He was the inspiration for the club and supporters. I was growing up when he was winning the Libertadores Cup and the World Club Cup.

As strikers, of course **Pele**, who is our greatest star, probably the best player of all time. There are many players who you could debate if they should be in your team or not; his inclusion is not up for discussion.

Ronaldo would be my other striker. He's such a great player because he came back from so many injuries, when nobody believed in him any more. He showed the whole world how strong he is when we won the World Cup in 2002.

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State of the game

In an exclusive interview with Keir Radnedge, FIFA president Sepp Blatter gives his views on the explosive Turkey-Switzerland World Cup qualifier in Istanbul, national anthems, World Cup rotation, player insurance, the make-up of FIFA's executive committee…and his own future

How does it feel to wake up first thing every morning as president of FIFA, "king" of world football?
First of all, I'm happy to be alive – that's basic! But I have never set out in a bad mood. Ever since I've been in FIFA I have achieved my dream of working for football. The one thing I've learned is that football is more than kicking a ball around and scoring goals. I am fulfilling what I would ideally have liked to do with my life both now and in the future.

People who reach high public office tend to say they are not going to change, but are you the same person you were when you joined FIFA in 1975?
I've changed. Initially, I had many links with football as an amateur player. But in the 30 years I have spent at FIFA I have developed – just as the game has developed. I am not the same as when I arrived in 1975 – and football is not the same. So who influences who? Did football influence me or did I influence football? It doesn't matter, we grew up together. It's my life. I'm dedicated to the game, to how it is played and to the consequences. And these are mostly positive in a disturbed world. I must say it's good to have football.

After the Turkey-Switzerland World Cup qualifying play-off, you were criticised in Istanbul for reacting as more of a Swiss fan than as the president of FIFA. Was that true?
I think it was a totally wrong interpretation. I have always made a policy of not attending matches when Switzerland are playing, otherwise I would indeed run the risk of being identified as a supporter. The first thing I said, as a Swiss citizen, was "congratulations to the Swiss team on qualifying". But everything I have said after that was as FIFA president. The president of the Turkish federation has assured me that he understood my position. What I can say, as FIFA president, is that fair play was missing from this rendezvous. Now let's wait and see what the investigation decides. I had hoped we could finish it quickly but it will not be possible to complete such an in-depth investigation with the players and coaches and officials involved until the end of the year. In any case, it will have no effect on the 2006 World Cup.

You suggested that perhaps FIFA might consider banning the playing of national anthems at games. Was that a serious proposal?
I have seen so many international matches where the anthems were jeered and whistled. But the only solution is to educate people. Perhaps we should make a public announcement, saying: "Let's stand for the national anthems and please observe the moment in silence, being respectful to both the national anthem of the visiting team and your team." People should not confuse the national anthem with nationalism.

'Fair play was missing in Istanbul but let's await the investigation'

Will the issue be discussed formally?
Sure, we will bring this to the attention of the next meeting of the executive committee.

Trouble…FIFA is looking into the Turkey v Switzerland flare-up

What feedback have you received so far concerning the experiments with the Smartball and goal-line technology?
We had one trial in Peru at the World Under-17 Championship, with a second to be undertaken at the Club World Championship. I can say there have been a lot of positive results but nothing conclusive – and as long as it's not conclusive, it's not possible to put it into practice. We can use it at the World Cup only if we know it really does work. Otherwise, it's best to go without.

Do you think it was a dangerous precedent to order a replay of the World Cup qualifier between Bahrain and Uzbekistan because the referee was judged to have made a technical error in not ordering a penalty-kick to be retaken after encroachment?
I think it has happened before, in a major European club match, though I don't remember which one now. The point is this was a technical error which was the subject of a protest by Uzbekistan. If they had made no protest perhaps we would have let the result stand. But they protested. They even wanted to have the tie awarded to them, 3-0. In fact, I was surprised that the assistant referee and the fourth official didn't make the referee aware of his error. The situation is clearly defined in Law 12. It was not a subjective matter for the referee. It was a technical error.

But you couldn't replay a match on those grounds in the World Cup finals, could you?
Let me tell you that if, in the World Cup finals, there are referees who commit such technical errors and that all the other people around the pitch – commissioners, fourth officials and so on – can't see it then something is seriously wrong!

Is it a welcome relief to have a World Cup finals being so smoothly organised by the German organising committee after all the complexities of the last World Cup in Korea and Japan?
Well, the organisation is certainly easier but the pleasure of attending the World Cup remains the same when you like football as I like football. But certainly it is easier for FIFA. We are nearby and it's easier because of the language. In 2002, there were two different languages, neither of which are widely spoken internationally.

Are you confident about the World Cup in South Africa in 2010?
Yes, I met state president Thabo Mbeki and his vice-president. They are working hard there, though there are some problems still concerning, for example, the stadium in Cape Town. They need to build a new stadium. The soccer stadium there holds 22,000 and the rugby stadium holds around 34,000. But neither is ideal.

Danny Jordaan, the bid leader for South Africa, told me he felt FIFA's focus has changed between the 2006 and 2010 bids. He thought FIFA's concerns are now centred far more on business and commercial issues. Is that a fair comment?
It's a matter of circumstance. At the time we laid down all the commercial contracts

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for the 2002 and 2006 World Cups we did not know where they would be played. Now we have a host for 2010 so we are renegotiating all our contracts. You know, when we decided to introduce rotation, to help get the World Cup to Africa, there were some reservations on the FIFA executive. But in the meantime the economic value of the World Cup has outgrown the value to the host nation. This is not because of Africa or South Africa but because "product football" nowadays is so good.

So it no longer matters really where the World Cup is staged?
It maintains its value whether it is in England, Germany, Italy or Brazil – or even if those nations are not playing in it. No, what matters is World Cup football itself. For example, the television audiences are much higher than for the Olympic Games.

Was the rotation merely a device to get the World Cup to Africa?
We decided on Africa for 2010 and South America for 2014. After that we have to make a decision – and that will not be easy. For example, if we consider that South America is part of the Americas, then CONCACAF will not be happy. The next stop under rotation, for 2018, would normally be Asia because it is Asia, Europe, Africa, America. But I doubt whether the executive committee will be happy to have a full circle of rotation again after 2014.

When will a decision be made?
Before the 2010 World Cup is played.

If rotation ends and 2018 is "open" to European nations, how would you assess the prospects for a proposed joint bid by Holland and Belgium? I remember you saying "never again" after Korea/Japan.
The decision we took was that as long as there is one single national association able to organise a World Cup then we would stick with sole hosting. But if it's a different situation we would have to be flexible.

Setting aside the Asia or Oceania issue, would that mean Australia and New Zealand could be joint hosts in 2018?
Well, if rotation is completed or correctly followed then the World Cup in 2018 could go to Asia and you would definitely have sole hosts available in probably China, maybe India and some others.

How would FIFA feel about England bidding for 2018 but wanting to use, say, the Millennium stadium in Cardiff and/or Hampden Park in Glasgow as venues?
We already have enough problems with the 2012 Olympics!

Keeping faith in 2010…South African president Thabo Mbeki

Do you understand why the Scottish FA is so firmly opposed to participation in a joint British team for the London Games?
I don't know the precise reasons but I must say we have received letters on the issue not only from Scottish football organisations but also from the Scottish public. Basically, it's up to the organisers to decide who will be playing. What we have said is that Team Great Britain will not affect the privileges that have been given to the four British associations. It can also work the other way. I was very surprised to see the success of the Great Britain curling teams at the 2002 Winter Olympics in Salt Lake City. But I think they were almost all from Scotland and I don't think the English objected.

What is the insurance status of players at the World Cup?
Before an international match it is necessary that a player is insured according to the FIFA regulations that have been seen and adopted by the European Union. That insurance is the responsibility of the club. However, maybe the situation will arise when a club says to the national association: "Our insurance does not cover injuries when he is playing in the national team." Then it is up to the national association to come up with a solution, because it is nonsense if, nowadays, you have high-level national team matches involving players who are not insured. It's crazy. Somebody had to take the lead to resolve that, so we at FIFA are creating a special insurance for all the players at the 2006 World Cup.

'It's crazy if players are not insured for high-level national team matches'

A FIFA policy?
Yes, in future we must ensure that when a player is called up for his national team he is insured. However, if a big English club whose players are valued at £5million or more finds the national team insurance – with, say, Togo – is inadequate then they must come to an arrangement between them. It's a question of responsibility. I think that now, for the World Cup, it's definitely down to FIFA. For qualifying matches, which are administered by the regional associations, then the national federations must look after insurance. If the Moroccan federation had done this, the Charleroi case would not have arisen [the Belgian club are claiming compensation for the fact that midfielder Abdelmajid Oulmers was injured while on international duty].

So compensating the clubs for national team selections is a different matter?
It's a wrong demand as far as FIFA or UEFA is concerned. The clubs should ask the national federations. The finalist nations at the World Cup in Germany will receive a huge amount of money. The total is 332million Swiss francs [£146m], and just the starting money for every team is 2m Swiss francs [£875,000] per match. They have a minimum guaranteed three matches, so that adds up to 6m Swiss francs [£2.6m], plus another 1m Swiss francs [£440,000] for preparation, meaning they have 7m Swiss francs [£3m] already there.

It sounds like Monopoly money, for passing Go…
What we suggest to the national associations is that they should resolve the issue of compensation by doing what many – such as Germany, Switzerland and Holland, and I think also Italy and Spain – already do in Europe. So, you see, this compensation already exists for top clubs within many of our associations, including G-14 members. Frankly, I don't think they need more money. Anyway, the clubs should also be aware that when a player is playing for the national team his commercial value increases. So everybody should be happy.

Can this mistrust between the clubs and national associations ever be resolved?
It is down to the interests of the clubs. They want the best players; then the national associations also need the best players. Ideally, we need a synthesis in which both parties say: "OK, here's an international calendar. We each use the players when the international calendar allows it." Then there should be no problems.

Why are they so reluctant?
Well, because on one side sometimes the national associations organise matches on dates set aside only for friendlies. On the other hand, the clubs do not respect the necessary time for players to relax. When they have finished, let's say, a European season, instead of giving them two or three weeks' holiday, you know what the clubs do? They go to China, Japan, South Africa or the United States to make money.

Are friendly internationals on the way out?
No, because you need friendly international matches to prepare a national team,

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otherwise you are always playing competitive matches. The players and coaches need the opportunity to experiment. They also provide an opportunity for nations from different continents to play against each other. Otherwise, they can only meet at the World Cup or, for a very few, at the Confederations Cup.

How is the anti-corruption task force progressing?
The two groups considering finances and competition have already started work and the third group will consider political interference and communication. Then the task force will report to the 2006 congress with specific proposals to be implemented in 2007. If it affects, for instance, the nationality of players or the number of clubs in a league then more time will be needed to implement it, probably from 2010.

So after 2010, FIFA could order that top divisions in leagues everywhere should have no more than, say, 16 teams?
I don't know what the number should be. In any case, we want dialogue and not confrontation.

Continents collide… Germany meet Tunisia at the Confederations Cup

Do you think the FIFA executive now provides adequate representation for the various interest groups within the game? It comprises only representatives from the national associations and regional federations. Do you think the executive would benefit from club and referee representation?
I think that so far we have always had a representative of a club on the executive committee.

But hasn't that been by accident?
As it stands, election to the FIFA executive is through the FIFA congress and not through the confederations. For example, my position as FIFA president is not a simple one because I am chairman of a board that is not composed or elected by the same bodies. Members come in with their own different agendas. Your suggestion would mean a real democratic composition of the committee. Ideally, we should have at least one representative of the referees, one for the coaches, medical – we always have someone from the medical side – and then the club representative. This would be ideal but we have found the structures difficult to change. We have tried to revise the relevant statutes but the confederations have always, naturally, said: "No, no, we like it as it is."

Your presidential term runs until 2007. But is there a case for limiting the number of terms or imposing an age limit?
I think it would be good to have a limit on the number of terms. But I also think the term is too short. On his first election the president has only four years. But in those four years you have to fight to maintain your position. So I like the idea used by the International Olympic Committee to have a president elected for eight years, or it could be six years. I think this is long enough. The president should, initially, have eight years and then be eligible for a further four years. Of course, the IOC also has an age limit. But I believe that is wrong because you have people who are 80 years old and in good shape intellectually and others who are 60 but look and act as if they are 90.

So do you envisage continuing beyond 2007?
Yes, definitely.

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WS WORLD SOCCER GLOBAL VIEW Paul Gardner

Songs of rage

Blatter is right to call time on anthems

NATIONAL ANTHEMS, according to Sepp Blatter, are becoming something of a problem for football, to the point where FIFA is considering banning them from being played before matches.

Let me tell you my favourite anthem anecdote; it should give you an idea of where I stand on this. Back in the 1960s, in New York, we had the International Soccer League featuring teams from all over the globe…and their national anthems. So, we duly stood to attention…and on this particular occasion we stood, and stood, and stood…as the anthem ploughed on and the crowd hooted and the players fidgeted. Suddenly, the anthem came to a raucous halt as the stadium resounded with that tearing noise we were all familiar with back then, the sound of a pick-up head being dragged violently across the grooves of a record.

Laughter all round, not least from the players whose anthem had been slighted. That's really the only time I can recall the playing of an anthem actually putting an entire stadium into a good mood.

The usual response, when things go wrong with national anthem playing, is for all humour to disappear immediately, for national pride to rear its formidable head and claim that it has been insulted, for solemn apologies to be demanded, and, if that doesn't happen, then for war to be declared.

Well, no, I made that last bit up… or did I? In 1969, with relations between El Salvador and Honduras already at breaking point, it was the insulting of the Honduran flag and anthem during a World Cup play-off in San Salvador that spilled the countries into outright war.

The United Arab Emirates were furious at the 1998 Asian Games when they were mistakenly greeted with the Saudi Arabian anthem; an Ethiopian team walked off the field in 1999 when the wrong anthem was played, while last year both Zimbabwe and Nigeria were hailed with the wrong anthems.

In the USA, where every sporting event starts with the national anthem, frequently badly sung, a new twist on the insult was discovered this year. When England played Colombia in New Jersey, the anthems of the two competing countries were played, but not *The Star-Spangled Banner*. Acting New Jersey governor Richard Codey complained: "It's disrespectful to us as hosts, to our country, the teams, the sport and all involved." He sent a letter of protest to Britain's ambassador to the United States.

I have felt for many years that the playing of national anthems before international games is absurd. Musically, most of them are second-rate – the *Marseillaise* excepted. But the singing of them, of course, makes matters much, much worse. I have just been wading through the lyrics of 30 or so national anthems, and can report that the sentiments expressed are frequently bloodthirsty (something that lets the *Marseillaise* down badly), militaristic and often include appeals to God to prove a country's right-eousness by showering his or her blessings on it.

'Doing away with anthems will not stop fans singing but will eliminate a focus for disrespect'

When such lofty thoughts are absent, anthems tend to become simply vapid examples of bad pastoral poetry. National anthems are surely supposed to move the emotions of those who sing them, they have to be aggressive and boastful. They have, in fact, to say – one way or another – "we are better and braver, stronger and purer and so on than you are".

"As soon as you have overt nationalism mixed in with passion and emotion, it becomes an explosive situation," Blatter says.

One might ask where he has been on this issue over the past 20 years, as anthem-abuse has been steadily growing. Internal abuse has come from the hooligans, particularly the English, who threaten to take over *God Save The Queen* and bawl it out as the theme song for the racist National Front; as for external abuse, it is almost a given for the visiting team's anthem to be booed.

Hand on heart…Australia get in patriotic mood

Blatter, who is Swiss, was outraged because the Swiss anthem was greeted with jeers and whistles before the World Cup qualifying play-off second leg against Turkey in Istanbul. But the Turks could justifiably claim that their anthem had been insulted during the first leg in Berne. On the same day the Turks were trashing the Swiss anthem, the Australians booed the Uruguay anthem in Sydney, saying it was only what the Uruguayans had done to the Australian anthem in Montevideo.

I wonder just how deep this nationalism goes. Left to their own devices, fans come up with their own songs. Liverpool have *You'll Never Walk Alone* (which is American), Dutch fans belt out the grand march from *Aida* (Italian), while awful versions of a Sousa march (also American) rattle around English stadiums.

Blatter has got this one right. Doing away with the anthems will not stop the fans singing, but it will eliminate a focus for disrespect, even hatred – an officially-sanctioned moment that can almost ensure a vital game gets off to an ugly, abrasive and unsporting start.

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Staying mobile

Simon Banks examines why Vodafone has switched off its shirt sponsorship deal with Manchester United

Talking millions…now Scholes, Giggs and Solskjaer must deal with new sponsors

THE DECISION BY mobile phone operator Vodafone to terminate its £9million-a-year shirt sponsorship deal with Manchester United two years early has been interpreted as a sign that the club have lost their appeal after the team's dip in form. But the decision is more to do with the economics of the mobile phone industry than indifferent performances on the pitch.

Vodafone paid £6billion for a UK third-generation mobile licence in 2000 and it did so because it wanted to offer subscribers access to lucrative new services such as picture messaging, web access and video downloads. Football was seen as "killer content" for those services, just as it had been for the internet and pay-TV, and Vodafone had good reason to believe that its relationship with United could be leveraged to provide access to video clips of goals which it could then sell to subscribers.

'The UEFA deal meant Vodafone had no reason to continue with United'

The problem for Vodafone and United was that the club didn't actually own the mobile rights – they had been sold by the Premier League to Vodafone's rival Hutchison, which trades under the name 3. When Vodafone first signed with United, it knew that mobile rights were unavailable as the Premier League's new media deals had just been announced. However, United and other big clubs were lobbying the Premier League (and UEFA, in relation to Champions League games) for mobile and internet rights to be returned to the clubs. If Vodafone's split from United signifies anything, it is that it believes that the campaign has failed in the short term and is unlikely to succeed in the long term.

Vodafone teamed up with 3 in 2003 and jointly secured access to Premier League mobile rights for a total of £100m for three years. That figure compares to the £35m 3 paid in 2000, also for three years' worth of rights. The 2003 deal allows both companies to sell exclusive video match highlights, previews, archive footage and Premiership round-ups, as well as other services such as audio bulletins, "near-live" picture messages and match scores.

Champions League rights

Just as the Premier League owns the mobile rights to its games, so UEFA owns the rights to the Champions League. Vodafone announced that it had signed a three-year deal with UEFA the day before it said it was terminating its deal with United. The UEFA deal gives Vodafone the exclusive worldwide mobile rights to the Champions League, so there really was no reason for it to continue with its United deal as it now had access to all their matches, except those in the FA Cup.

While United's loss of their shirt sponsor just two years into a four-year contract is certainly a blow, the club should have little difficulty in finding a replacement. At £9m a year, Vodafone's sponsorship was worth less than deals struck between Real Madrid and Siemens at £10m, Chelsea and Samsung at £10.7m, Bayern Munich and T-Com at £12m, and Juventus and Tamoil at £15m – so the club will be looking for a figure nearer the top of that range.

Speculation that the Glazer family will be looking for a US-facing corporation to sign up would appear to be wide of the mark as the US is one of the few territories where United have very little recognition. It is likely that a global company with a strong presence in the Far East would be more willing to meet the club's financial expectations.

Football is playing a key role in the global battle for third-generation mobile subscribers – T-Com, for example, recently signed an exclusive deal with the German federation – as the operators struggle to gain sufficient customer numbers to justify the huge amounts they paid for the licences; £22bn was spent in the UK alone.

Whether the figures will actually add up is anyone's guess, but that is not the issue for clubs, leagues and national associations, who are more than happy to cash in while the mobile phone industry is throwing big money around.

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I do it my way…Mandaric cannot refrain from tinkering

Trouble at the top

Some bosses have created an unworkable mix at their clubs

THE TERMS "president", "chairman" and "owner" are being brought into disrepute. Such delineations should signify an individual of impeccable character and judgement; one with the charisma to lead but the patience to persevere, possessing both the insight for the right appointments and then full confidence in delegation.

Does this sound like the description of Florentino Perez or Milan Mandaric or Rupert Lowe?

Clearly, achieving command of Real Madrid, Portsmouth and Southampton demands considerable political and financial resources. Remaining in place by withstanding all the flak demands considerable self-belief and the thickest of skins. But that is not all sporting leadership is about, as events at the three clubs demonstrate.

Lowe's reassuring demeanour in front of the media contrasts with the rapid-fire procession of managers and coaches through St Mary's. Glenn Hoddle was never going to resist a call home to Tottenham, and both Southampton and Dave Jones were innocent victims in different ways of that scandalous court case.

But throwing together Harry Redknapp and Sir Clive Woodward, characters from opposite stylistic extremes and backgrounds, was a recipe for disaster. Redknapp has to manage his own way in his own space; his reaction to the imposition of Croat Velimir Zajec at Portsmouth proved the point.

Now Portsmouth, Saints' arch-rivals, have their own idiosyncratic leader in Mandaric. No one can ignore him. Fratton Park boasts a statue of the man, he features in the stadium mural, and when the fans leave and the seats tip up there is his face staring out over the pitch – master of the emptiness he surveys.

Portsmouth did well under Redknapp in his first spell in charge, achieving promotion and clinging on in the Premiership. But Mandaric could not refrain from tinkering. A club whose history, support and income cry out for an English-based foundation went running in bizarre fashion after the hapless Zajec and then doomed Frenchman Alain Perrin.

When it comes to tinkering, of course, Perez is in a different league. His initial work at Madrid was brilliant. He sorted out the finances, built a commercial monster and revived terrace pride by importing some of the world's finest players.

He should have stopped there and gone back to his construction business, allowing his managers and coaches to get on with their jobs. But he could not. He sacks coach after coach, almost as if he is suffering from some compulsive disorder, and each new man finds a more febrile, fevered and disorientated dressing-room.

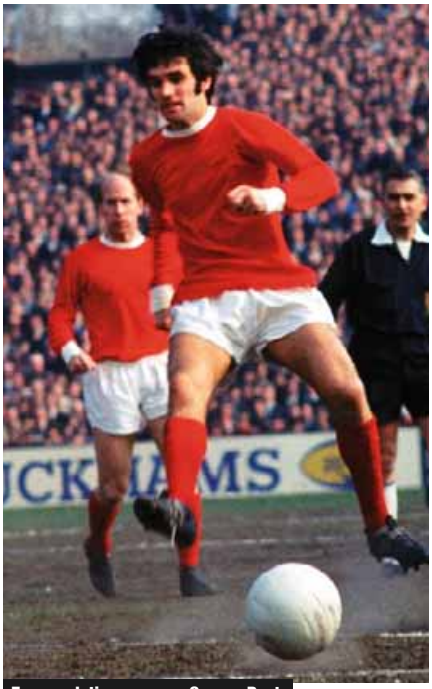
Hiding to nothing

Vanderlei Luxemburgo was always on a hiding to nothing. Madrid, down the years, have found their finest South American resources in Argentina, not Brazil. That remains as true today.

Captain Raul was among senior players appalled by the over-exuberant goal celebrations of Ronaldo and co early this season; Paulo Campos, one of Luxemburgo's assistants, clashed publicly and riskily with midfielder Guti, whose influence far exceeds the level suggested by his occasional appearances, then Robinho's agent, Vagner Ribeiro, talked of a rift between the Spanish and Brazilian players.

Players from Spain, England, Denmark and Brazil, a coach from Brazil with no European experience, an Italian general manager, Arrigo Sacchi, and an executive vice-president with little experience, Emilio Butragueno.

Just as at Portsmouth and Southampton, so at Madrid – a Tower of Babel with too many people coming from too many directions and speaking too many different football languages. No surprise, then, to see them all come tumbling down.


Encapsulating an era…George Best

George Best: the wonder years

GEORGE BEST'S demise provided various bright glimpses of the game. One was seeing those career highlights re-run, another was the welcome opportunity to read some real "old-fashioned" sports writing.

Hugh McIlvanney, Brian Glanville, David Lacey etc were all given generous rein to recapture the essence of an era in which they participated in a manner and descriptive style light years removed from the current youthful focus on vapid quotes and perfunctory "analysis".

Best played his football when live coverage of both League and FA Cup matches was unknown. Anyone wishing to witness his talent at work had either to buy a ticket or wait for the occasional late-night highlights.

Oddly and perversely, Best's off-the-field antics down the years kept alive the flame of remembrance. Doubtless he was the most naturally-talented player to come out of Ireland, though whether his contribution to Irish football was beyond that of, say, Danny Blanchflower is an issue that waits on the perspective of time.

He did not play at a World Cup, but so what? Neither did Alfredo Di Stefano, for many still the greatest footballer of all time. Best's excuse was that Northern Ireland, in his day, never qualified. Di Stefano endured even greater frustration – he was in Spain's squad in Chile in 1962 but did not appear because of injury.

But then, greatness in football is not merely about trophies and titles; it's also about the indelible marking of an era and a legacy of sporting emotion. The least one can say is that George Best rates highly on both accounts.

Havelange: the world awaits

NOW HERE IS a book review with a difference. The book in question will not be published until May 8 next year. That date should offer a clue to long-seasoned FIFA-watchers about the subject: that day, one month before the opening of the World Cup finals, will also be the 90th birthday of Jean-Marie Faustin Godefroid Havelange; Joao in our commentaries but never to his face.

To Havelange, more than anyone else, the current generation of sports administrators owes the sports marketing revolution, which has turned professional football, athletics, rugby, hockey and every other sport into multi-million segments of the worldwide entertainment empire.

For 24 years this autocratic, dictatorial Brazilian ruled world football with a rod of steel. He had one office in Rio de Janeiro, his home city, and another at FIFA's Zurich headquarters. He commanded, he imposed, he ordered, he decided. The mechanisms remain controversial and the motivation a murky mixture.

Attempting to tie down all the contradictions in one coherent book is another Brazilian, Ernesto Rodrigues. He was singled out to write an official – but uncensored – autobiography on the strength of his acclaimed biography of another Brazilian legend, Formula One driver Ayrton Senna.

Rodrigues set himself an intimidating task after gleaning opinions, memories and reflections of Havelange from officials, sportsmen, politicians and those who, like myself, had followed Havelange's career and faced him across a table or microphone.

His project promises not to be the sycophantic biography that "the old man" might expect and his friends and family would demand. Nor, however, will it take the populist route in the manner of several solely-destructive critiques.

It is getting on for eight years since Havelange retired from the FIFA presidency and bequeathed the succession to Sepp Blatter, formerly his general secretary.

Havelange has been accused of all manner of wilful political and financial intrigue with international football, allegedly a mere vehicle for his millionaire's vanity.

But he did not need the money; his game was all about power. How he came to wield it to a degree hitherto unknown in international sport – and far beyond the breadth of the president of the Olympic movement – is a fascinating subject.

Rising through the ranks

An Olympic swimmer in his youth – he competed at the notorious Berlin Games of 1936 – Havelange made his fortune in the transport business and rose through the ranks of sports administration.

By the mid-1950s he was president of the Brazilian sports confederation and thus supreme ruler of the country's football. Here, Havelange brought his administrative and managerial expertise to bear on the nation's hitherto disorganised national team.

By 1970, three World Cup wins had given him the platform to oust Sir Stanley Rous to secure the FIFA presidency.

The rest we all know. How Havelange teamed up with Horst Dassler, heir to the Adidas empire, to harness the riches available from the synergy of television and sponsorship. Where Havelange and football led, every other sport followed. The evidence? Just about every sport now has its own World Cup with associated marketing programme.

Bodies such as FIFA and the IOC have metamorphosed from "mere" sports authorities into worldwide business empires.

Havelange once said: "When a new country gains its independence it cannot decide which body to join first: FIFA or the United Nations." He was not joking. No one can remember a Havelange joke. This was a man in deadly earnest.

Jules Rimet may have created the World Cup, but Havelange turned it from a sports festival into a billion-dollar enterprise.

World Cup supremo…Havelange at Mexico 86

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Upping the ante…Ballack holds the aces over his future at Bayern

Ballack plays the waiting game

GERMANY

THE PROTRACTED CONTRACT manoeuvres of Bayern Munich's star midfielder Michael Ballack and agent Dr Michael Becker resemble nothing more than a high-stakes game of poker. With Ballack's contract due to run out in June next year and a host of top European clubs rumoured to be willing to break the bank to secure his services, the Germany captain holds all the aces. Thus far, he and Becker have made the most of their strong hand.

It is a simple strategy. You use reported offers from Manchester United (£32million over five years) and Internazionale (£42m over four years) to up the ante, refuse to commit to the £21m, four-year package that Bayern had put before you and essentially keep your options open, hoping Chelsea (unlikely) or Real Madrid (much more likely) arrive on the scene in January so you can grab the pot.

Ballack, German Footballer of the Year for three of the past four seasons, can make up the rules of this game as he goes along. The 29-year-old certainly knows how to shift the goalposts. Initially, he told Bayern he would make up his mind by the end of November; then the deadline was brought forward to the middle of that month; now he says the announcement will come early next year.

The Bayern management have grown tired of all the prevarication and their patience finally snapped in mid-November. Renowned for their financial prudence, they believed they had pushed the wage envelope as far as they could and had hoped to announce to a grateful AGM that their main man was staying. But no go. Instead, president Karl-Heinz Rummenigge informed club members that the new deal was no longer on the table. Cue concerted applause from the audience.

"Michael says he still hasn't decided," declared Rummenigge. "When we spoke four weeks ago, we agreed that if no decision was forthcoming by now, we would withdraw this record offer. It doesn't mean that Michael will leave us. But as of now we have to study the transfer market and look for alternatives."

Possible targets include Brazilians Marcelinho (Hertha Berlin) and Lincoln (Schalke), Hamburg's in-form Dutchman Rafael Van der Vaart and young Croat Niko Kranjcar of Hajduk Split.

Mixed messages

But will Ballack be over the hills and far away after the World Cup? The messages are mixed. One moment he declares his undying love for Bayern and his Bavarian lakeside villa – "my heart belongs here". The next, he talks with undisguised relish about the prospect of playing abroad. "No German has played for a top European club for some time. That would be a great, exciting challenge for me."

Ballack is not the only Bayern player who could leave on a free transfer at the end of this season. French full-back Willy Sagnol, who seems to make wantaway noises every season only to have second thoughts, is tipped to join Juventus.

A mere six months from the World Cup kick-off, German football has found itself plunged into a spiral of violence. Police had to break up a pre-arranged mass brawl involving German and Polish fans in a wood near Brandenburg, while Hamburg midfielder Alexander Laas was left bloodied after being struck on the head by a drumstick thrown by a Koln supporter during a Bundesliga match.

World Cup organising committee vice-president Wolfgang Niersbach reacted by saying safety nets would be erected behind the goals at next summer's venues. "After this unfortunate incident, we have little choice," he said. "However, we must not panic, either. This was a one-off and we don't want to dampen the atmosphere with too many security measures. We have the benefit of wonderful video surveillance in our stadia and there is no way culprits can just melt away into the crowd."

Nick Bidwell

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Best feet forward…new coach Ricardo (centre) has Bordeaux working harder both in training and on the pitch

Bordeaux back in business

FRANCE

HE MAY BE a dead ringer for film director Oliver Stone, but surely nobody could have predicted such a speedy and dramatic re-write of the Bordeaux script from Brazilian coach Ricardo. The side who finished only 15th in the 20-team top division last season are riding high this time round, lying third after 17 games and playing with a newly-instilled grit and determination.

When the 41-year-old pitched up last June to replace Michel Pavon (on his way because of "health problems"), *Les Girondins* were, if not in crisis, then at the very least highly demoralised. And Bordeaux's lowly finish could easily have been so much worse since they gained only two points more than relegated Caen.

The club's notoriously passionate fans had had enough and made their displeasure known, unfurling banners around the Chaban-Delmas stadium reminding the players of the responsibility that comes with wearing the famous dark blue shirt.

But none of this underachievement and unrest seemed to faze Ricardo, who'd been sitting plotting his next managerial move in the chi-chi Rio de Janeiro suburb of Barra da Tijuca since leaving Flamengo in November 2004. Nor did the fact that he didn't have the technical qualifications currently demanded in France, despite having previously managed Paris Saint-Germain for two years in the late 1990s, when he took them to victory in both the French Cup and League Cup in 1998. Bordeaux got around the problem by handing Ricardo the nebulous title of general manager and must now be delighted they cocked a snook at the coaches' union to make sure they got their man.

Admittedly, Bordeaux are still a country mile behind defending champions Lyon – the gap to the leaders was 12 points as the season's halfway mark approached – but all the same, Ricardo has performed some turnaround. In rather un-Brazilian fashion, the one-time coach of his country's Olympic team puts Bordeaux's success this season down to discipline and hard graft. "Everybody agreed to work harder," he explains. "Players, staff, everybody."

"Hard work is the basis of everything he does," confirms right-hand man Patrick Colleter (the pair were team-mates at PSG in the early 1990s). "Confidence has returned to the squad, and once you have confidence it's much easier to work."

Tinkerman Ricardo

So, Ricardo has got the Bordeaux attitude right, but his judicious team tinkering has also played a big part in the team's revival. Eyebrows were raised in the summer when national team midfielder and Bordeaux favourite Camel Meriem was allowed to leave for Monaco and Euro 2004-winning defender Michalis Kapsis was shoved out of the door back home to Olympiakos.

But Ricardo knew exactly what he was doing. Back into the centre of defence came the previously out-of-favour Togolese rock Kodjo Afanou, while little-known Brazilian Fernando Menegazzo – brought in from Siena – has performed admirably in a defensive midfield role. The results speak for themselves. Bordeaux have conceded just 10 goals in their eight wins, seven draws and two defeats to date, the joint lowest with Lyon.

That said, with just 17 goals scored, winning in style is clearly not high on Ricardo's agenda. "Maybe we won't be putting on a show this year," he admits. "But we're going to be solid right to the death."

English fans might well understand why Ricardo is relying on his defence. Two of his strikers, Lilian Laslandes and Jean-Claude Darcheville, were both spectacular failures at Sunderland and Nottingham Forest respectively. And two of the players fighting for midfield places – former Liverpool pair Vladimir Smicer and Bruno Cheyrou – are also not the sort to get supporters bubbling with excitement. But Ricardo's speciality is creating a solid team ethic and getting good collective performances out of his sides.

That is why his year-long loan signing of compatriot Denilson from Real Betis is so hard to fathom. The one-time *Selecao* golden boy is undeniably talented, but not exactly what you'd call a disciplined team worker. What's more, he has totally failed to set the French League alight, has been on the receiving end of a number of critical jibes and is nothing more than a fringe player.

"His standards have dropped," admits Ricardo. "But don't worry. He'll be back." And maybe you have to trust the coach's judgement. Standards had dropped at Bordeaux last season, too. Galvanised by their new Brazilian boss, however, this is a club very much back in business.

Howard Johnson

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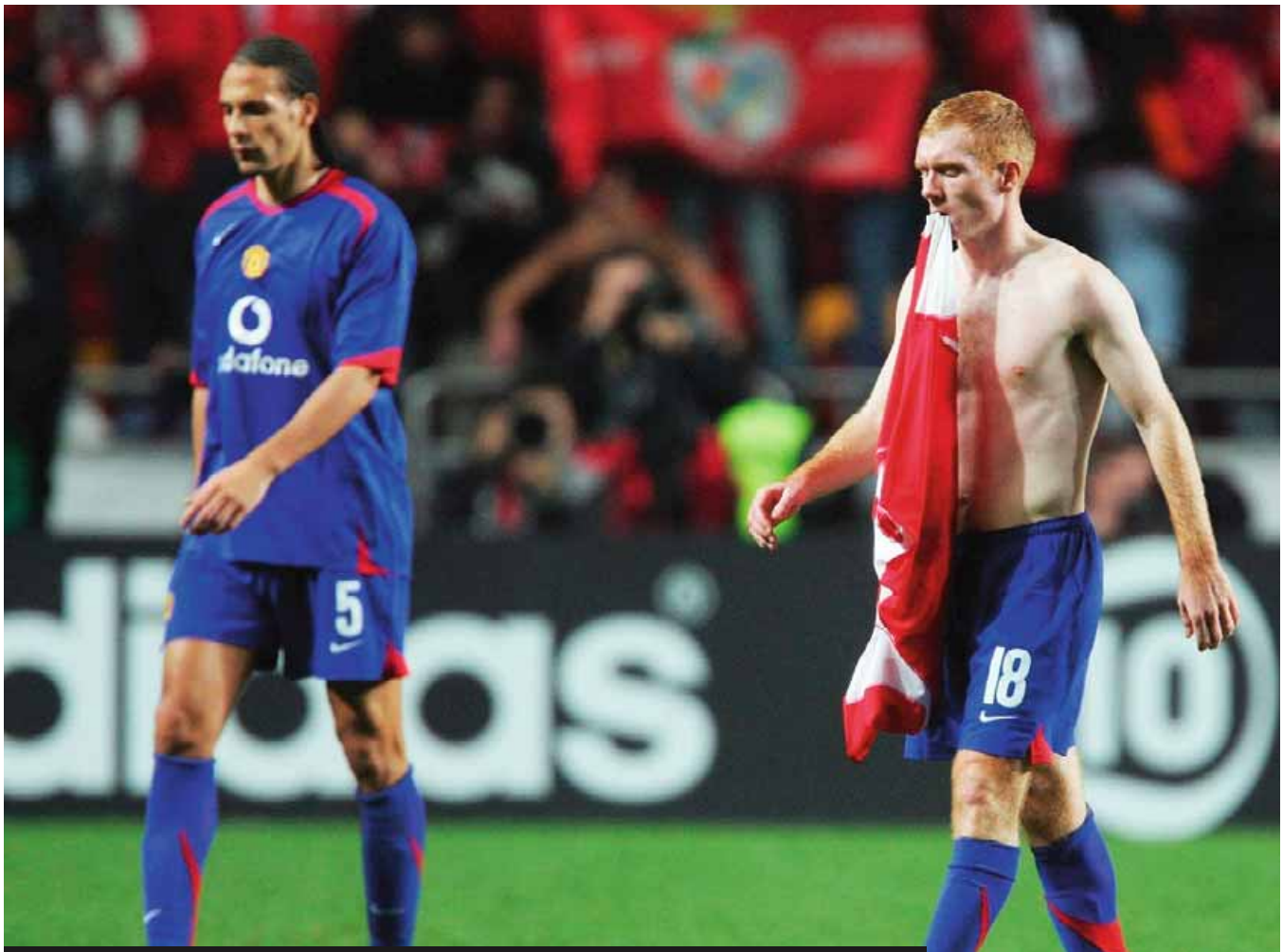

Heading for the exit…Rio Ferdinand and Paul Scholes walk off disconsolately after Manchester United's 2-1 defeat at Benfica

United crash out

Alex Ferguson's future is questioned after his team's first failure to reach the knockout stages in 10 years

MANCHESTER UNITED were the biggest casualties of this season's Champions League group stage. A 2-1 defeat by Benfica in Lisbon on the final matchday meant the 1999 champions missed out on the knockout stages of the competition for the first time in 10 years. Indeed, Sir Alex Ferguson's side do not even have the small consolation of dropping into the UEFA Cup after finishing bottom of Group D.

Almost inevitably, United's exit raised speculation about the future of the manager. Ferguson himself looked shocked at the post-match press conference, saying: "We're disappointed. It's a low point – we've always qualified for [the latter stages in] Europe."

Injuries to key players – Ryan Giggs, Gabriel Heinze and Gary Neville – and the unsettling nature of Roy Keane's departure from Old Trafford have all contributed to the team's malaise. But United's failure to score goals – just three in six group games – proved to be the decisive factor.

United had begun brightly enough in the tournament. After disposing of Hungary's Debrecen 6-0 on aggregate in the third qualifying round, Ferguson's men began what looked like being a relatively easy group with a 0-0 draw at Villarreal and then a 2-1 defeat of Benfica at Old Trafford.

But further goalless draws, at home to Lille and Villarreal, and a 1-0 defeat by the French side in Paris left United needing to beat Benfica at the Stadium of Light to be sure of reaching the last 16.

The significance of the venue and opponents was not lost on United, so soon after the death of George Best, whose performances against the Lisbon side had lit up the European game in the 1960s. But this time round, there was no such sparkle. Although United took an early lead through Paul Scholes they held it for just 10 minutes, striker Geovanni heading the equaliser. Beto shot home a deflected winner before half-time.

So Benfica qualified for the knockout stages for the first time as runners-up to Villarreal, who scored only three goals but conceded just one, the joint lowest total in the competition. Lille finished level on points with United, but took the UEFA Cup spot on superior head-to-head record.

Barcelona proved to be the form team of the group stage, scoring 16 goals as they more than comfortably topped Group C. They dropped only two points – in a goalless draw at Panathinaikos – and hit four, five and three goals in their home games against Udinese, Panathinaikos and Werder Bremen respectively.

Ronaldinho was Barca's top scorer with five, but it was far from a one-man show. Eight other team-mates got on the scoresheet, including Samuel Eto'o, Deco and wonderkid Lionel Messi.

Werder Bremen were bottom of the group going into the final matchday, but a 5-1 thrashing of Panathinaikos, coupled with Barcelona's 2-0 win at Udinese, ensured second place for the Germans. Udinese had been five minutes away from reaching the knockout stages but conceded two late goals against Barcelona, who were playing without the rested Ronaldinho and injured Eto'o.

Lyon were the other side to earn rave reviews after their unbeaten run to win Group F. The French champions quickly took control as summer signings John Carew and Fred made sizeable contributions up front and midfielder Juninho Pernambucano continued to show his free-kick expertise.

A 3-0 home win over Real Madrid on matchday

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one, with all three goals scored in the first half, established the pattern, and Lyon dropped their only points when drawing 1-1 at Madrid.

Madrid, like Lyon, had qualified for the knockout stages with two games to spare, but finished with a 2-1 defeat at Olympiakos under caretaker coach Juan Roman Lopez Caro, who had rested several of the galacticos. Former Barcelona star Rivaldo scored the winner.

Rosenborg qualified for the UEFA Cup despite their poor domestic form, pipping Olympiakos on head-to-head record.

Group A went as predicted, with heavyweights Juventus and Bayern Munich going through, and Club Brugge and Rapid Wien the also-rans. Juventus topped the group by two points after beating Rapid 3-1 on the final day, while Bayern were held to a 1-1 draw in Bruges.

The Belgian side qualified for the UEFA Cup, while Rapid were the only team not to win a point in the group stage.

Arsenal were comfortable winners of Group B, although they had an awkward start, when only a late Dennis Bergkamp goal secured a home victory over Swiss underdogs Thun. The Gunners also won their next four games, but lost their 100 per cent record on the final matchday when held to a 0-0 draw at home to Ajax. Thierry Henry missed a penalty.

Ajax were runners-up, while Thun continued their remarkable season with qualification for the UEFA Cup.

Match-winner Kaka

Group E went down to the wire, with Milan, PSV Eindhoven and Schalke all in contention for top spot at the beginning of the final matchday. Milan took the prize, with Brazilian midfielder Kaka proving the match-winner by scoring twice in the 3-2 home victory over Schalke. The Germans had been 3-1 down but a goal from another Brazilian, Lincoln, brought them close to the draw they needed to reach the knockout stages at Milan's expense, but the hosts held on to their lead.

PSV took the runners-up spot to qualify for the knockout stages for the second consecutive season after a 2-0 home defeat of Fenerbahce.

The group produced some of the most exciting matches of this season's competition. On matchday three, Fenerbahce and Schalke drew 3-3 in Istanbul, with the hosts' Ghanaian midfielder Stephen Appiah scoring the final goal with a spectacular lob. On matchday five, Milan thrashed Fenerbahce 4-0 in Istanbul, Andrii Shevchenko scoring all the goals on his club's first visit to the city since last season's Final defeat.

Oh, yes!…Rangers' Peter Lovenkrands after scoring v Inter

Good thrashing…Torsten Frings celebrates Werder's 5-1 defeat of Panathinaikos

As expected, Liverpool and Chelsea dominated Group G and conceded just one goal each to match Villarreal's defensive record in Group D.

Having successfully negotiated all three qualifying rounds, defending champions Liverpool got off to a flying start in the group, scoring twice in the first 15 minutes of their opening game at Betis and eventually winning 2-1.

They went on to top the group unbeaten, a point clear of Chelsea, who lost 1-0 to Betis on matchday four. Both meetings between the English sides were 0-0 draws, with the second – at Stamford Bridge, on the final matchday – featuring a horror tackle by Chelsea's Michael Essien on fellow midfielder Didi Hamann. The German described it as the worst challenge he had ever experienced.

Betis took the UEFA Cup spot despite a last-day defeat to Anderlecht, who thus ended their record run of 12 straight Champions League losses.

In Group H, Rangers put their domestic troubles to one side as they became the first Scottish side to reach the Champions League knockout stages. A 1-1 draw at home to Internazionale on the final matchday was enough to put Alex McLeish's side through. Danish international Peter Lovenkrands was the hero, his goal cancelling out an early Adriano header.

Inter had qualified as group winners with a game to spare, even though they lost 2-0 at FC Porto on matchday three. That win was the only one of the campaign for the 2004 European champions, who finished bottom of the group. Unfancied Artmedia Bratislava took third spot to continue their European campaign in the UEFA Cup.

Gavin Hamilton

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Racing for the door…Steven Pienaar is one of a number of Ajax players who will be leaving at the end of the season

Ajax put house in order

HOLLAND

AJAX, ONLY SEVENTH in the domestic League but qualified for the Champions League knockout stages, are already looking towards next season. New director Martin Van Geel, who came from AZ in the close season, set a deadline of December 2 for all players whose contracts expire next summer to state whether or not they wished to stay.

Maxwell, Steven Pienaar and Hatem Trabelsi announced they would be leaving the Amsterdam ArenA by the end of the season, while Wesley Sneijder, Thomas Vermaelen and Michael Krohn-Deli – currently on loan at RKC Waalwijk – signed new contracts. Meanwhile, Hans Vonk and Yannis Anastasiou have been told to look for another club.

One of Ajax's transfer targets, AZ defender Ron Vlaar, had a disastrous international debut in the 3-1 friendly defeat by Italy in November. The 20-year-old, still only a reserve at his club, put through his own goal and made mistakes that led to Italy's other two goals.

Heerenveen striker Klaas Jan Huntelaar, another Ajax target, had a much better time on the international stage, scoring both goals in the Under-21s' 2-0 defeat of Slovenia that put Holland into next year's European Championship finals.

Utrecht defender David Di Tommaso has died at the age of 26 after suffering a suspected heart attack in his sleep. The Frenchman, previously with Monaco and Sedan, was voted Utrecht's best player last season, his first at the club.

Robert Maaskant became the first top-flight coach to be fired this season after Willem II, Cup finalists last term, slumped to second bottom in the League. Director Kees Zwamborn has taken the coaching reins in a caretaker capacity.

The career of RBC Roosendaal defender Arjan Ebbinge is under threat after he suffered a serious intestinal injury following a collision with a Utrecht player during a League match in October. Ebbinge has undergone three operations but there are doubts about whether he will be able to play again.

Klaas-Jan Droppert

BELGIUM

Geert demoted after away-day blues

Mouscron have demoted coach Geert Broeckaert to his former job – leading the youth team – after the club fell to fifth from bottom with just 13 points from 14 games. Mouscron had lost all seven of their away games, the most recent – a 5-0 thumping at promoted Roeselare – proving the final straw for the board. Assistant Gil Vandenbrouck has taken over in a caretaker capacity.

Dutchman Rene Trost has failed to stop the rot at bottom-of-the-table Lierse, losing his first two games in charge, which made it six defeats in a row for the club.

Gilbert Bodart's winning start at La Louviere came to an abrupt halt when his charges exited the Cup after a 1-0 defeat at Second Division leaders Mons, then lost 4-0 at Club Brugge in the League.

Anderlecht were the victims of an even bigger Cup shock, losing on penalties at home to Geel, the bottom team in the Second Division, after a 0-0 draw. With FC Brussels succumbing 1-0 to another Second Division side, Oud-Heverlee-Leuven, the capital was left without any representatives in the last 16.

Anderlecht then lost 2-1 to Westerlo, their first League defeat in 27 games, and extended their record run of Champions League defeats to 12 in going down 2-0 at home to Chelsea.

Club Brugge closed the gap on League leaders Standard Liege – who had lost 3-1 at FC Brussels – and Anderlecht in second when beating ground-sharers Cercle Brugge 1-0. The goal was highly controversial, however, Bosko Balaban putting the

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ball into the net with his hand and from an offside position!

Any hopes Belgium's Under-21s coach Jean-Francois De Sart had of filling the senior team vacancy have surely disappeared after the dramatic failure of his previously unbeaten team to reach the European Championship finals. Belgium were leading Ukraine 4-2 on aggregate in the second leg of their qualifying play-off but conceded three goals in the last 20 minutes after De Sart made some debatable substitutions.

Nicholas Harling

SWITZERLAND

Thun stop the rot

Thun ended a run of five consecutive defeats in the Swiss League with a 3-0 win at home to Yverdon. It gave a much-needed boost to beleaguered coach Longo Schonenberger, whose side had fallen to fifth place, 16 points behind leaders Basle.

Schonenberger is still at loggerheads with the board over their refusal to release cash for new signings, despite the income from participation in the Champions League.

Ivar von Rulach

REPUBLIC OF IRELAND

Cork pop to top

Cork City pipped Derry City to the Premier Division title by beating them 2-0 at home on the final day of the season. Goals from John O'Flynn and Liam Kearney ensured Cork were champions for the first time since 1993, their only previous triumph.

It was a first League success for manager Damien Richardson, who took over just a week before the start of the season in March, following the sacking of Pat Dolan. Cork were denied the Double, however, losing 2-0 to Drogheda in the Cup Final.

Shamrock Rovers were relegated for the first time after losing 3-2 on aggregate to promotion candidates Dublin City in a play-off. The Hoops have been members of the League since 1922 and have won the championship a record 15 times.

The demotion tops off a troubled season for Rovers, who had had eight points deducted for a licencing irregularity and then nearly went to the wall because of financial trouble. Manager Roddy Collins has been sacked, with former Kilkenny boss and ex-Rovers player Pat Scully taking over.

Dublin City's win sent them back to the top flight a year after going down. They are joined by First Division champions Sligo Rovers, with Finn Harps the other side to take the drop.

Sean Creedon

Eagles dive

PORTUGAL

DEFENDING CHAMPIONS BENFICA have had a month to forget, failing to win in six games, four of them in the League, where they lay only sixth after 12 rounds, eight points behind joint leaders FC Porto and Nacional.

The Lisbon Eagles have looked decidedly mediocre without injured captain Simao Sabrosa and Italian forward Fabrizio Miccoli, and Dutch coach Ronald Koeman has started to feel the heat.

Paulo Bento's managerial career got off to a flying start as he led Sporting Lisbon to three consecutive League victories, which lifted them from eighth place to fourth. The former Portugal midfielder does not have a full coaching licence yet, but has nonetheless inspired good performances on the pitch and taken decisive action off it. Lack of discipline within the squad was one of the reasons for the dismissal of predecessor Jose Peseiro. In an effort to tackle the problem, Bento dropped several players, including leading scorer Liedson, for their poor work ethic during training.

Nacional have never hit such heady heights this far into a season but the Madeira club are proving tough nuts to crack, having conceded only four goals in 12 games.

The national team extended their unbeaten run to 11 matches following a 2-0 win over Croatia and a 1-1 draw with Northern Ireland.

Pedro Pinto

Fall guy…Simao's absence has hit Benfica

Stronach quits at the double

AUSTRIA

Cup of woe…trophies have proved hard to come by for Stronach at Austria Wien

FRANK STRONACH quit as League president within days of saying he was to relinquish control of top club side Austria Wien, leaving a major gap in domestic football.

The Austro-Canadian millionaire was elected in February 1999 and, in his own words, has "introduced modern business structures to our League and created a professional basis". But the potential conflict of interests caused by his position at Austria Wien brought much criticism.

Meanwhile, Stronach was facing a no-confidence motion at his club's AGM stemming from a power struggle. "There has been a lot of talk inside and outside the club about who shall lead it and how," said Stronach. "This is a bad situation and, therefore, I will dissolve my sponsoring contract with FK Austria at the earliest possible date."

Stronach has poured millions into the club since taking over in 1998, when Austria had substantial debts. But there has been only one League title win during that time and Champions League football has proved elusive. Stronach has also been criticised for his rapid-fire attitude to coaches – he has got through nine in seven years, including former club and international greats Herbert Prohaska and Toni Polster. Both are said to be in the running for the club presidency.

Harry Miltner

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Alliansi in a fix

FINLAND

That's the way out…club captain Timo Marjamaa has quit stricken Allianssi and more players are set to follow

ALLIANSSI, WHOSE NAME was tarnished by match-fixing allegations last summer, have descended further into crisis and now risk losing their League licence if they cannot sort out their problems in the near future.

The players say they have not received their wages since September, a mass exodus is on the cards – club captain Timo Marjamaa has already left to join HJK Helsinki – and Belgian coach Thierry Pister has also quit. Meanwhile, the club have severed their ties with Chinese owner Ye Zheyun and Belgian general manager Olivier Suray and say they will sue them for not fulfilling their financial commitments.

"Allianssi had ample time to make me an offer for a new contract. But since no one seems to know what will happen to the club, I had to look after my own interests," Marjamaa said.

Erkki Salo, a former board member, has been put in charge to try to establish a "Finnish" Allianssi out of the remnants of the club. But he has only until January 15, the deadline set by the League's licence committee, to show that the new entity is financially sound and has a viable playing squad. If he does not convince them, the Vantaa-based club, who finished seventh last season, will be booted out of the top flight, with their place given to relegated RoPS Rovaniemi.

Meanwhile, there has been little progress in the police investigation into the alleged match-fixing of Allianssi's 8-0 defeat by Haka last July, shortly after Ye, a businessman, took control of the club.

Antti Muurinen, fired as Finland coach in July, is to take charge of FC Lahti in succession to Harri Kampman.

Champions MyPa have lost their captain Tuomas Haapala to Manchester City, while left-back Tuomo Kononen has joined Norway's Odd Grenland.

Pentti Hietanen

SWEDEN

Mild spell ends

Hakan Mild, the former national team and IFK Gothenburg stalwart, is to hang up his boots and will become the club's sporting director. The 33-year-old midfielder played 454 games for IFK, winning five League titles, and also had spells in Switzerland, Spain and England.

The club have signed Thomas Olsson from Malmo to replace Mild and have retained left-back Oscar Wendt on a three-year contract after he seemed certain to leave for Holland's Heerenveen.

Two other golden oldies have also left the stage. Full-back Nicklas Rask has retired after playing 300 games for champions Djurgardens, while Halmstads stopper Torbjorn Arvidsson has quit after 17 years at the club during which he played 543 games and won two League titles.

Halmstads have also been hit by the departure of Ghana forward Yaw Preki after two seasons at the club.

Promoted AIK Stockholm have lost out on promising left-back Stefan Batan – who has joined city rivals Djurgardens – after believing they had signed him. Batan, who played for relegated Assyriska last season, has claimed the confusion arose because of a mistake by his agent.

Pentti Hietanen

DENMARK

Going Mads for Laudrup Mark III

Mads Thuno Laudrup appears set to follow father Michael and uncle Brian into top-class football after leading KB Copenhagen to the Danish youth championship. The youngster is also captain of the national Under-16 side, whose coach, Hans Brun Larsen, led the Under-18s when Michael – now

coach of champions Brondby – was part of the team. "Mads is what I call a catalyst footballer," says Larsen. "He is a player who makes things happen for the team, and he also works tremendously hard in midfield."

National coach Morten Olsen ended speculation about his future by extending his contract until 2010. The 56-year-old, whose existing deal was due to run out next June, had been linked with several club jobs after Denmark failed to reach the World Cup.

Jim Holden

ICELAND

KR made to sweat

KR players have had little time to rest in the close season, with newly-installed coach Teitur Thordarson getting them training up to three times a day as he looks to bring the title back to the club – champions in 2002 and 2003 – after they finished only sixth in the past two years.

Grindavik also have a new coach, Sigurdur Jonsson, who left promoted Vikingur to take the job. He replaces Milan Stefan Jankovic, who now takes the assistant role. Magnus Gylfason, sacked by KR last season, filled the vacancy at Vikingur.

IA Akranes, who finished third last season, received a boost when securing the return of national team midfielder Thordur Gudjonsson after a 12-year spell in Germany, Belgium, Spain and England. However, a contractual dispute with current club Stoke City means Gudjonsson may have to wait until June to rejoin IA, where he began his career.

Rab Christie

ESTONIA

Goes stays

National team coach Jelle Goes has ended speculation about his future by signing a contract extension until the end of 2007. "I have been here for five years and I'd like to stay," said the Dutchman, who formerly led Estonia's Under-21s.

Record championship winners Flora Tallinn, who finished only fourth last season, have appointed Pasi Rautiainen as coach in a three-year deal. The Finn, who formerly led city rivals Levadia, said he hoped he could give the team an "emotional push". Rautiainen also suggested he had the stamina for a long fight, saying: "I am just like a Duracell battery – I wear down slowly."

National team forward Andres Oper has been named Player of the Year for the third time.

Champions TVMK beat Cup-holders Levadia 1-0 in the Supercup.

Andres Must

LATVIA

Venta and Olimps go straight back down

While Metalurgs Liepaja celebrated their first championship trophy since 1958, Venta Kuldiga and Olimps Riga went down after their first season in the top division. Venta finished bottom with just nine points having lost the last 19 of the 28-game campaign. Olimps took the drop after losing 2-0 in the relegation/promotion play-off against Ditton Daugavpils. Second level champions Dizvanagi Rezekne were promoted automatically.

Andres Must

WALES

Cwmbran in crisis

Cwmbran Town manager Brian Coyne and a number of his players have quit after a financial crisis forced the club to slash their wage bill. Cwmbran, champions in the League of Wales' inaugural season, 1992-93, have fallen on hard times after failing to secure sponsorship deals. New manager Sean Wharton is having to use a number of youth players to plug the gaps in the first team.

Promoted Cardiff Grange Harlequins are having similar financial problems and have also lost a number of players. Chris Golton, 16, is currently keeping goal following the departure of Neil Thomas for Port Talbot Town.

Mel Thomas

NORTHERN IRELAND

Au revoir, Pascal

Institute manager Pascal Vaudequin, the first Frenchman to lead an Irish League side, resigned after 10 months in charge following a poor start to the season. The final straw was a 5-0 thrashing at managerless Newry City.

Vaudequin's replacement is Liam Beckett, who resigned from Cliftonville in the summer. Beckett got off to a good start, Institute winning 5-2 at Coleraine – where the manager was once a full-back – in his first match in charge.

Referee Frankie Hiles had to be escorted from the pitch after sending off three Portadown players, awarding two penalties against them and sending manager Ronnie McFall to the stands for his protests during the 3-2 home defeat by Dungannon Swifts. Supporters threw stones at Hiles' car as he drove away from the ground.

Portadown, depleted by suspensions, were thumped 4-0 away by leaders Linfield in their next game.

Glentoran midfielder Scott Young broke a leg in the 3-0 win at Glenavon, his comeback game after two years out following another broken leg.

Ards got their first points of the season after nine straight defeats when beating Limavady United 2-1.

Roy Kitson

Sidelined…Per Ciljan Skjelbred

Nothing rosy at Rosenborg

NORWAY

ROSENBORG, DEPOSED as domestic champions after 13 straight titles, had to settle for third place in their Champions League group and consequent entry into the UEFA Cup. In addition, 18-year-old midfielder Per Ciljan Skjelbred is out for six months after breaking a leg in a challenge by Ieroklis Stoltidis during the 1-1 home draw with Olympiakos.

Stefan Ishizaki will leave new champions Valerenga and return to his native Sweden after failing to win a regular place. Coming in are forward Jan Derek Sorensen from neighbours Lyn and Ham-Kam defender Jarl Andre Storbaek. Rosenborg released keeper Ivar Ronningen, replacing him with Lars Hirschfeld from Tromso.

Cup winners Molde retained their top-flight place after beating Moss in the relegation/promotion play-off.

Sigurd Odegaard

Missing out…Rangers' Alan Hutton duels with Guillaume Beuzelin of Hibs

Winless woe for McLeish

SCOTLAND

ALEX McLEISH'S SEASON went from bad to worse when he became the first Rangers manager to endure a run of eight games without a victory in the club's 133-year history. The unwanted record came following the 2-1 League defeat at Hibernian, which left the champions 15 points behind leaders Celtic in fourth place.

The sequence included two defeats by their arch-rivals – 3-0 in the League and 2-0 in the League Cup – heaping even more pressure on the beleaguered manager.

Hibs' victory brought them to within four points of Celtic, who had surprisingly lost at home to second-bottom Dunfermline the day before. Hearts, the early pacesetters, were a point off the top after a lukewarm start under new manager Graham Rix. The former Arsenal and England midfielder kicked off with 1-1 draws at Aberdeen and Motherwell.

Alan Fairley

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In with the crowd…Otto Rehhagel's popularity has been reflected by the offer of a new deal as national coach

Carry on, Otto

GREECE

THE FA HAS shown its faith in national team coach Otto Rehhagel despite the failure to qualify for the World Cup by extending his contract for two years. The German guided Greece to their astonishing Euro 2004 triumph but could not repeat the magic in the World Cup qualifiers, as his team finished behind Ukraine, Turkey and Denmark in Group 2.

Rehhagel, who has held the post for four years, said he would not have made any other decision as "his heart is in Greece". The 66-year-old, who turned down the job of coaching Germany after Rudi Voller quit after Euro 2004, now has a contract to the end of 2007, with an option of a further six months should Greece qualify for Euro 2008. "It's a happy day for Greek soccer, we should celebrate," said national team midfielder Stelios Giannakopoulos. "Rehhagel is the man who brought us to the top and he is the most capable of continuing the effort."

The government has paved the way for fans' names to be printed on match tickets in the hope that it will help reduce hooliganism in the domestic game. The move was prompted by violence at the Levadiakos-AEK Athens match in late November.

As expected, a majority of clubs voted in favour of the formation of a Super League at a meeting in Athens. The representatives of eight clubs, including the Big Two, Olympiakos and Panathinaikos, also voted in favour of reducing the number of teams in the new league from the 16 in the current top division.

"The decision is leading us to new and better days. The standard will rise, the league will be more competitive and teams will receive greater income," said Olympiakos president Socrates Kokkalis. "Also, clubs will get stronger and the spectacle offered will be more appealing for fans."

Lou Economopoulos

CROATIA

Hajduk struggling to make cut

Defending champions Hajduk Split have continued to struggle despite a change of coach and are in danger of missing the cut for the championship play-offs. Only the top six go through, and it would be a humiliation for a club of Hajduk's standing to miss out. Last season, that exact scenario befell arch-rivals Dinamo Zagreb, but their sparkling form this term – they led the table by 11 points after 17 games – has made Hajduk's situation all the more galling for their fans.

Ivan Gudelj, who succeeded Miroslav Blazevic as coach in September, saw his side go four games without a win to slip to seventh in the table with five regular season games to play. That run included defeats by modest Kamen Ingrad, at home, and Cibalia, away.

Zdravko Reic

BOSNIA-HERZEGOVINA

Ref banned for throwing punch

Referee Duro Pekija and Sarajevo player Muhamed Dzaknic have been given six-month bans for throwing punches during an on-pitch brawl. The fighting broke out just after half-time in Sarajevo's Cup quarter-final second leg at home to city rivals Zeljeznicar, with the visitors leading 2-0 on aggregate. Pekija had only just disallowed a Sarajevo goal when he then ignored penalty claims by the home players. They surrounded the referee, who shocked everyone by hitting Samir Saric, one of the protesters, in the face. A number of the players then began hitting Pekija,

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with Dzaknic to the fore. The match was later awarded 3-0 to Zeljeznicar. The other Cup semi-finalists are Siroki Brijeg, Orasje and Zepce.

Zdravko Reic

SLOVENIA

Real deal for Dalibor

Dalibor Stevanovic, hailed as the new Zlatko Zahovic, has joined Real Sociedad for £700,000 on a four-and-a-half-year contract. The 20-year-old Domzale midfielder was targeted by a number of foreign clubs after his fine displays for Slovenia's Under-21s in the recent European Championship qualifiers. Stevanovic's good form had also helped Domzale take top spot in the domestic League.

Zdravko Reic

MACEDONIA

Rabotnicki go back to top

Defending champions Rabotnicki Kometal went top of the League after taking full advantage of slips by pacesetters Makedonija. The latter lost three games out of five, including a 1-0 defeat by Rabotnicki, who went on to beat Stip 2-1 and Sileks 4-2, both away, to take pole position.

Adnan Zekir has quit as coach of lowly Renova, citing the poor working conditions at the promoted club. Zekir is the second departure from Renova this season, Gani Sejdiu having been sacked after four rounds.

The national team, led by caretaker coach Boban Babunski, beat Liechtenstein 2-1 away in their November friendly. A national selection, mostly of Under-21s, finished runners-up to Paraguay in the LG Cup in Iran. Macedonia lost the Final 1-0 having beaten the hosts 2-1 in the semi-finals of the four-team tournament.

Michel Stojmanovski

CYPRUS

Clubs vie to link with Rink

Former Germany striker Paulo Rink has sparked a transfer scramble among the League challengers after hitting 10 goals in 11 games for mid-table Olympiakos Nicosia. Bernd Stange, coach of leaders Apollon, who already have League top scorer Lukas Sosin in their ranks, is rumoured to have contacted his compatriot with a view to signing him in the January transfer window. Rink, who was born in Brazil, is also interesting third-placed Omonia.

Soulis Theodosiou

MALTA

Sliema stutter

Champions Sliema Wanderers had their lead cut to a point after losing two games in a row, both at home, and drawing a third. Sliema followed up their shock 1-0 defeat to lowly Pieta Hotspurs by losing 2-0 to closest challengers Hibernians and then managing only a 1-1 draw at Hamrun Spartans. Paul Zammit has replaced J J Aquilina as coach of Valletta after the club's disappointing start to the season. Zammit quit Mosta to take up the position.

Domenico Aquilina

Beitar challenge…Luis Fernandez

Haifa maintain perfect record

ISRAEL

RUNAWAY LEADERS Maccabi Haifa finished the first third of the League campaign with their 100 per cent record intact after coming from behind to beat Maccabi Netanya 3-1 away. Haifa led second-placed Hapoel Tel Aviv by 12 points after their 11 straight victories to put a third consecutive championship well within reach. No club has completed a title hat-trick since Hapoel Petach Tikva won five in a row from 1959 to 1963.

Big-spending Beitar Jerusalem owner Arkady Gaidamak has appointed former Paris Saint-Germain coach Luis Fernandez as general manager as he continues in his quest to make his club a European powerhouse. The Frenchman, who arrives from Qatari side Al Rayyan, will work to develop the club in all departments, alongside Dutch first-team coach Ton Kaanen, who was signed up in October. Gaidamak, a Russia-born billionaire businessman, was largely unknown to Israeli soccer fans before buying Beitar in August.

Ori Lewis

Vukcevic heads east

Change of direction…Simon Vukcevic

SERBIA & MONTENEGRO

THERE HAVE BEEN surprises all round on the transfer front over the past month. OFK Belgrade denied English media reports that their highly promising 16-year-old central defender Slobodan Rajkovic had been signed by Chelsea, saying there had been no contact at all between the two clubs. Meanwhile, Partizan Belgrade's 19-year-old midfielder Simon Vukcevic has joined Russian side Saturn Ramenskoye, having said he was aiming to move to one of Europe's top leagues and was linked with Juventus and Valencia among other big names last season. Partizan accepted a £2.75million offer for the Under-21 international, who has signed a five-year deal.

Another surprise was the arrival of little-known Spanish coach Jaime Bauza at struggling Smederevo. The 46-year-old, who replaces the sacked Tomislav Sivic, was hired by director Goran Bogdanovic, who played under Bauza at Mallorca 10 years ago.

League leaders Red Star Belgrade lost 1-0 to Vojvodina in Novi Sad to allow defending champions Partizan Belgrade – winners of four consecutive games – to close within three points of their arch-rivals. Red Star followed up their poor domestic result with a fine 3-1 victory at home to Roma to revive their hopes of qualifying for the UEFA Cup knockout stages.

The national team, without seven regular starters, beat China 2-0 and lost 2-0 to South Korea on their Far East tour. Meanwhile, the Under-21s reached the European Championship finals with a 5-2 aggregate victory over Croatia in the qualifying play-offs. Lecce striker Mirko Vucinic hit a hat-trick in the 3-1 first leg win in Belgrade.

Vladimir Novak

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Shakhtar play the blame game

UKRAINE

Running out of patience…Anatoliy Tymoshchuk has questioned attitudes at Shakhtar

THE BLAME GAME has been in full swing at champions Shakhtar Donetsk following their sudden downturn in form. The club lost their League lead after a 1-0 home defeat by arch-rivals Kyiv Dynamo, prompting Romanian coach Mircea Lucescu to claim: "Referees in Ukraine are doing their job in favour of only Kyiv Dynamo. If they do not do so, they are immediately disqualified."

Shakhtar then lost 1-0 at home in the UEFA Cup to Rapid Bucharest, who, gallingly for Mircea, are coached by his son, Razvan. Shakhtar played so badly that the fans turned on the players, eliciting an obscene gesture from Brazilian midfielder Matuzalem.

"I can't accept such an attitude to our fans from Matuzalem," club captain Anatoliy Tymoshchuk said on his website. "Foreigners signed by Shakhtar must show their skills on the field and not provoke our supporters."

The national team midfielder also severely criticised the club management for their transfer policy and rebuked some of his team-mates for a lack of professionalism. "They simply think about themselves and not about the club's future," Tymoshchuk claimed.

Ironically, his own career direction is under the spotlight. He is the best holding midfielder in the domestic League, has clearly outgrown its standard and is on the wanted list of some major foreign clubs, with a valuation of up to £9million. But Tymoshchuk claims he has yet to receive a proper answer concerning his future from club president Rinat Akhmetov.

The latter has said: "I understand Tymoshchuk will improve his skills abroad but I have to think about the future of Shakhtar. Now I face a dilemma: I'll be damned by the player if I do not sell him and damned by the club if he does go abroad."

Another League slip by Shakhtar – managing only a 2-2 draw at struggling Dnipro – allowed Dynamo, 3-1 winners at home to Arsenal, to increase their lead to three points. The result made it 15 wins out of 16 games under caretaker coach Anatoliy Demyanenko, with a goals tally of 45 for and just six against.

Oleg Zadernovsky

ROMANIA

Popescu fails to dislodge Sandu

Gheorghe Popescu has failed in his bid to become FA president, the former Romania defender losing 187-102 to incumbent Mircea Sandu in the election. The result has caused consternation among many observers since it means the old guard of administrators, under whom Romanian football has become bedevilled by match-fixing, financial irregularities and refereeing scandals, still hold sway.

Popescu's defeat prompted Sportul Studentesc coach Dan Petrescu to declare that he was ready to look for a new job abroad. "I'll accept the first proposal from a different country in order to quit Romanian soccer, which now has no chance of cleaning up its act," vowed Petrescu, a former Romania team-mate of Popescu.

Sandu, who has been president since 1990 and has now won five elections, has appointed another former Romania star, Ionut Lupescu, as the FA's general director in an attempt to improve his image and his poor relationship with the media and supporters.

Coach Razvan Lucescu won the UEFA Cup battle against father Mircea when Rapid Bucharest beat Shakhtar Donetsk 1-0 in Ukraine in their group encounter. "It was so strange to fight against the same man who taught you a lot of the coaching job's secrets," said 36-year-old Razvan.

Lucescu senior had rashly predicted that Shakhtar would win, saying: "I'll beat Razvan because he must learn to lose if he wants to become a good coach."

Radu Timofte

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POLAND

Clubs take control

A new company called Ekstraklasa SA, comprising all 16 top-division clubs, has taken responsibility from the Polish FA to organise top-flight matches. Andrzej Rusko, president of speedway team Atlas Wroclaw, has been elected president of the new Orange Ekstraklasa League on a two-year term. The 54-year-old has promised to resign from his position at Atlas.

Defending champions Wisla Krakow drew 0-0 with second-placed Legia Warsaw in the 15th round of games to stay at the top on goal difference. Wisla caretaker coach Tomasz Kulawik is still at the helm as they continue their search for a long-term replacement for the sacked Jerzy Engel.

League top scorer Grzegorz Piechna netted on his international debut, as a substitute in the 3-1 friendly win against Estonia in November. The 29-year-old Korona Kielce striker, nicknamed "Sausage" because he used to work in a sausage factory when an amateur, hit 14 goals in the first 15 League games. But that did not stop Korona from bringing in another striker, Krzysztof Gajtkowski, from Lech Poznan.

Dariusz Kurowski

HUNGARY

Fehervar keep it tight

Surprise package Fehervar continue to lead the way in the League after winning 10 of their first 13 games. The Lake Balaton side's run has been based on a solid defence, conceding only seven goals, the fewest in the League. The key figures are Romanian goalkeeper Daniel Tudor, 19-year-old right-back Csaba Csizmadia and veteran centre-back Attila Kuttor.

By contrast, second-placed Ujpest have the best attack, with strike partners Peter Rajczi and Zoltan Kovacs contributing 17 of the team's overall tally of 33.

Peterjon Cresswell

KAZAKHSTAN

Time up for Timofeev

Sergei Timofeev has been sacked as national coach following the poor showing in the World Cup qualifying campaign. There was little coherence because no fewer than 57 players were used in the 12 games, and Kazakhstan gained only one point – from a 0-0 draw away to second-bottom Georgia. Timofeev was hampered by an influx of foreign players at Kazakh top-division clubs, limiting the pool of available players with adequate experience. The FA has now imposed a rule limiting to five the number of foreign players who can appear for a club in a match.

Aktobe Lento won the championship for the first time, finishing a point clear of Tobol. The latter's Nurbol Zhumaskaliyev was named Player of the Year.

Vladimir Kalinkovich

ARMENIA

Five-star Pyunik

Pyunik Yerevan won the championship for the fifth year running despite having lost their three African stars – Apula Bete, Carl Lombe and Mamadou Diawara – during the summer. Henk Visman's team finished four points clear of Mika Ashtarak in the six-club championship pool.

Vladimir Kalinkovich

Griga: 'Sparta aren't good enough'

CZECH REPUBLIC

SPARTA PRAGUE COACH Stanislav Griga has acknowledged that his squad lacks the quality to compete in Europe, or even in the domestic League, after taking just one point from five Champions League group games and dropping to 12th place out of 16 in the Czech top flight. "When we win the ball, we immediately lose it," said the despondent coach after Sparta's 2-1 defeat at Ajax, which confirmed their exit from the Champions League. "When Ajax win it, because they have better players, they start a move. We don't have this quality. We make unforced errors."

Four days later, Griga's men lost 3-2 away to Zlin, their eighth domestic League defeat in 14 games.

Sparta's precarious position means the pressure is on the coach – who took over from Jaroslav Hrebik in October – to strengthen his squad in January. Griga said: "I know it's not realistic to begin rebuilding the team after a few months, but there are several changes I must make."

Meanwhile, there is uncertainty about whether highly experienced international Karel Poborsky will return to the fold at the end of his loan period to Second Division Ceske Budejovice at New Year. Poborsky made the switch following a dispute with the Sparta management.

Sam Beckwith

Second best…Sparta's Martin Hasek loses out to Urby Emanuelson of Ajax

Cross-town move…Sergei Ovchinnikov

Semin makes clean sweep at Dinamo

RUSSIA

YURI SEMIN, who stepped down as national team coach after failing to lead them to the World Cup finals, has hit the ground running after taking the reins at Dinamo Moscow.

The 58-year-old immediately got rid of 12 players, including veteran keeper Roman Berezovsky, who was replaced by Sergei Ovchinnikov from Lokomotiv Moscow. Semin coached the latter to the League title in 2002 and 2004.

Semin, a former Dinamo player, replaces Brazilian Ivo Wortmann, who was fired after the team finished only eighth in the League this year despite the presence of a number of expensive foreign signings. Former FC Porto stars Maniche, Costinha and Derlei underperformed, while Giorgios Seitaridis was a pale shadow of the player who did so well during Greece's run to the Euro 2004 title.

Former champions Spartak Moscow are back in the limelight after several disappointing years, having finished runners-up to city rivals CSKA in the League to take the other Champions League spot. Much of the credit for their revival goes to new coach Aleksandrs Starkovs, who took his native Latvia to the Euro 2004 finals, and captain Yegor Titov, who put in some great performances after a year-long doping suspension.

Victor Gusev

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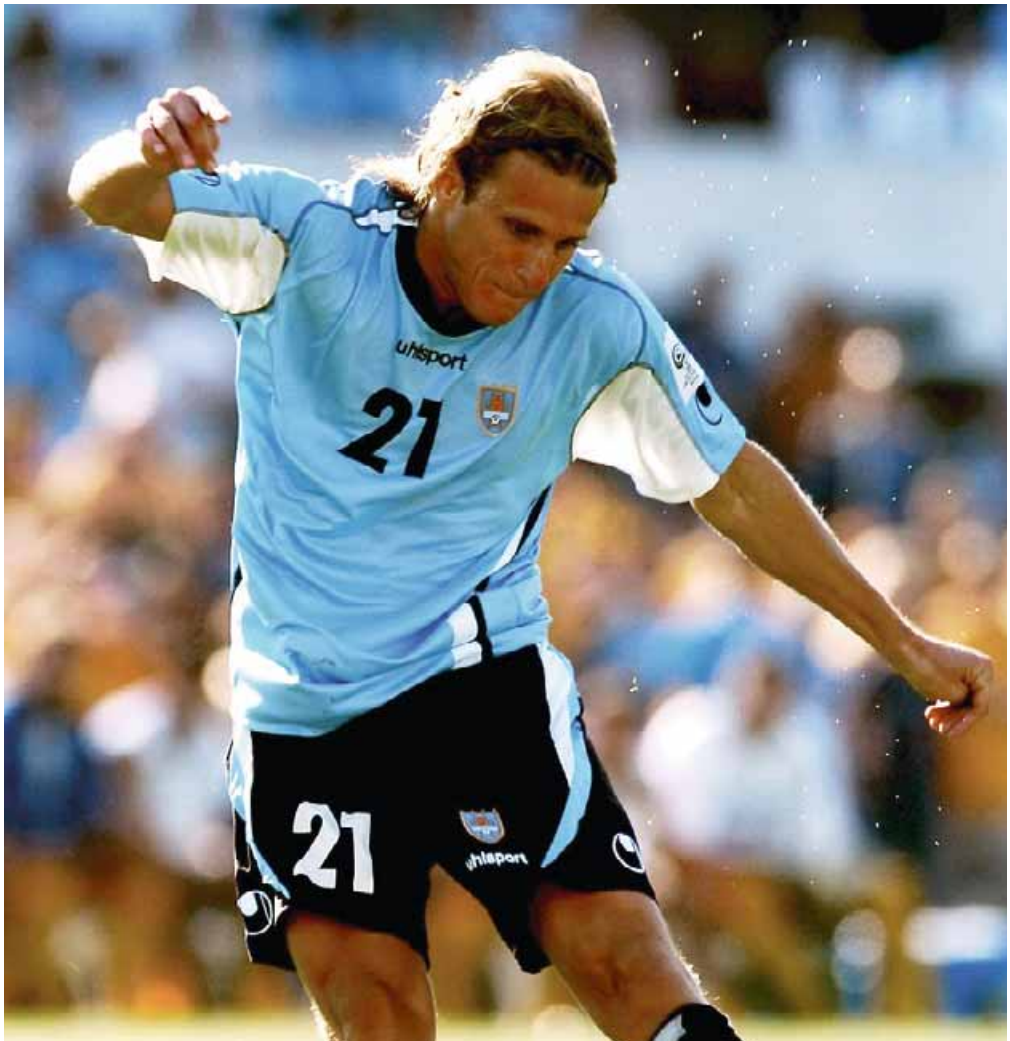

Out in the cold…non-Casal man Diego Forlan did not get a look-in at international level until he joined Manchester United

Paco feels the heat

URUGUAY

THE NATIONAL TEAM'S failure to qualify for the World Cup has led to a backlash against businessman Francisco "Paco" Casal and his company Tenfield, who own television rights for Uruguay games and the domestic championship and are agents for most of the country's top players.

Former Uruguay defender Hugo de Leon led the attacks, claiming the team had been privatised. "Uruguay must go back to being Uruguay," he said. "There's nothing wrong in losing as long as it's Uruguay and not a privatised national team. Everything is wrong here. They have used the Uruguay shirt. The national team belongs to the businessman who owns the television rights. He puts his players on display and puts in the coach he wants."

Meanwhile, about 200 fans responded to a campaign started by a local radio station and protested outside the headquarters of the FA, whose president, Eugenio Figueiredo, has been blamed for allowing Casal too much influence. Some carried banners reading: "Thanks a lot, Paco."

National newspaper *El Observador* also joined in, saying: "There are numerous factors that brought the patient to his death bed but the main reason is Casal and his monopoly, the owners of a power whose only aim is profit but which has failed to produce more competitive football. On the contrary, the product is discredited and weaker than ever before."

There have long been suspicions that players who do not use Casal's services are not even considered when it comes to playing for their country. Diego Forlan, for example, is a non-Casal man and only started being picked once he had joined Manchester United.

Uruguay captain Paolo Montero announced his international retirement after the penalty shoot-out defeat by Australia in the World Cup qualifying play-off.

In the League, River Plate's players walked off during their home game against Danubio in protest at what they said was unsporting behaviour by their opponents. River, already trailing 1-0, were furious when Danubio striker Ignacio Gonzalez kicked the ball into the empty net while goalkeeper Alexis Viera was lying injured in the penalty area. River kicked off presuming that Danubio would allow them to score to cancel out Gonzalez's dubious goal. Instead, Danubio won possession, went downfield and added a third. River walked off at that point and said they would demand a replay.

Brian Homewood

COLOMBIA

Ex-ref admits attempted bribe

Colombian football has been scandalised by the admission by former referee John Fernando Mosquera on national television that he had offered money to a match official to swing a game in the second group stage of the closing championship. But the referee involved, Eder Vergara, reported the incident before the game took place and the competition carried on with no apparent ill effects.

The most striking feature of the case was the bare-faced cheek with which Mosquera owned up to his actions. "This isn't serious, I haven't committed any crime," he said. "I haven't killed anyone and I haven't robbed anyone." Public prosecutors have announced an investigation.

Mosquera, who had a brief First Division career in 2002 before being thrown out, said he had offered Vergara the equivalent of £4,000 to help America beat Once Caldas for the benefit of a gambling ring. "I was going to get a commission, but he didn't want to accept," Mosquera said, adding: "I work with a gambler but I'm not involved with any club."

Vergara was taken off the game and instead refereed Pereira against Real Cartagena. Meanwhile, Once Caldas beat America 2-1.

The federation said a second referee, Hernando Buitrago, had also reported an attempted bribe before the America-Deportivo Cali game, which took place three days before the Once Caldas match, although it was not known who was behind the skulduggery this time. Once again, the intention was to get the official to swing the game in America's favour. Buitrago did take charge of the match – a 0-0 draw – but was isolated in a hotel room without telephone access in the hours before kick-off. America swiftly denied any involvement in the bribery attempts.

Brian Homewood

BOLIVIA

Debtors Bolivar lose points

Bolivar had three points deducted on the orders of FIFA for failing to pay the £35,000 owed to former coach Gustavo Huerta, who left the club earlier this year. Bolivar are mired in financial difficulties and some players are owed six months' wages.

Brazilian defender Julio Cesar Ferreira has already quit, and coach Vitor Barrientos commented: "We've talked about making sacrifices but

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there comes a moment when the players don't believe the promises any more. We've been abandoned."

Despite all this, Bolivar were second in the final stage of the opening championship, two points behind Blooming. They also managed a 3-1 win over arch-rivals The Strongest, who had Ronald Gutierrez and Alejandro Mena sent off.

Brian Homewood

CHILE

Espanola exit early

Opening champions Union Espanola missed out on the knockout stages of the closing championship after finishing only third in their group. Universidad Catolica, Colo Colo, Universidad de Chile, Huachipato, Cobresal, Universidad de Concepcion and Deportes La Serena qualified directly, while Cobreloa beat Deportes Concepcion in a play-off for the other quarter-finals spot.

Brian Homewood

MEXICO

Jaguares fall foul of youth rule

Jaguares missed out on the opening championship quarter-finals after falling foul of an unusual and controversial rule intended to encourage young Mexican talent in a competition awash with foreigners.

The federation decided that each team must have a Mexican player aged under 21 on the field for at least 765 minutes (eight and a half games) of the 17-game league stage.

Jaguares, who would have qualified as one of the two best third-placed sides, were docked three points for failing to comply and dropped to fifth in their group. Luis Fernando Tena, the fourth coach of the year at the Tuxtla Gutierrez-based club, said he had only one Mexican player under 21 in his first-team squad but rather than use him, preferred to field a more experienced player and gamble on his team getting enough points to qualify despite the penalty.

Tigres jumped above Jaguares after the points deduction to take one of the quarter-finals berths for third-placed sides, with Tecos UAG taking the other.

Guadalajara, Mexico's most popular club, missed the play-offs for the second tournament running. A large part of the blame lies at the door of owner Jorge Vergara for his bizarre decision to sack coach Benjamin Galindo three matches into the campaign.

Galindo had just led the team to the Libertadores Cup semi-finals when Vergara fired him on a whim – the coach's objections to Vergara's policy of allowing his players to be hired as guests at children's parties may have had something to do with his downfall – and brought in Xavier Azkargorta. The Spaniard took Bolivia to the 1994 World Cup but had not coached a top division club in the previous seven years. Guadalajara managed just two wins in 12 games under his leadership.

Their hopes of a quarter-final place were ended by an ignominious 3-0 defeat at Toluca, during which they had striker Adolfo Bautista and goalkeeper Oswaldo Sanchez sent off. The team were also involved in a brawl that held up play for five minutes.

Less than 24 hours later, Azkargorta became the fourth coach to be fired since Vergara bought the club for £70million in 2002.

Brian Homewood

In front…Lucas Lobos has helped drive Gimnasia to top spot

Gimnasia make late run

ARGENTINA

GIMNASIA Y ESGRIMA DE LA PLATA, the oldest club in the First Division, made a surprise late challenge for their first League title after dropping only two points during a 10-game run in the opening championship.

Gimnasia, who led Boca Juniors by a point with two games to play, are coached by Pedro Troglio, a former Gimnasia player and a member of Argentina's Italia 90 runners-up. Playmaker Lucas Lobos is widely hailed as one of the League's two outstanding young talents, along with Independiente's Sergio Aguero, and goalkeeper Carlos Navarro Montoya is still in great form at 39.

Troglio says: "One of the reasons for our success is playing two No 5s [Esteban Gonzalez and Matias Escobar] who dictate the rhythm and cover a lot of ground but quickly fall back to help out the defence when they need to." No 5s are traditionally the hub of Argentinian sides, playing just in front of the centre-backs.

Financially troubled Newell's Old Boys, last season's opening champions, have sold World Youth Cup-winning defender Ezequiel Garay to Racing Santander for only £950,000. The deal looks even more meagre since Boca are owed a large chunk of that fee after buying a 50 per cent stake in Garay for £575,000 with the prospect of signing him this year.

Eric Weil

No saving grace…Edwin Villafuerte appears to have no future at Barcelona

Barcelona sack troublesome 10

ECUADOR

NATIONAL TEAM goalkeeper Edwin Villafuerte and striker Agustin Delgado were among 10 players effectively sacked by Barcelona for indiscipline and alleged lack of effort. President Isidro Romero said the group would spend the rest of the year in the reserves and then be sold.

"They will never again have the honour of wearing this shirt," vowed Romero, adding that Delgado had treated the club as a spa following his arrival from Aucas and ex-Boca Juniors striker Antonio Barijho was "the worst foreigner ever to play in Ecuador".

Romero acted after a 2-0 home defeat by Olmedo left Barcelona bottom of the six-team final stage in the closing championship. Coach Carlos Sevilla was also fired.

Brian Homewood

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Al-Montashari turns up to take prize

ASIAN PLAYER OF THE YEAR AWARD

AFTER A YEAR in which Asian players shone in Europe, a relative unknown scooped the Player of the Year award in what will go down as one of the most controversial decisions in the continent's football in recent years.

Saudi Arabia defender Hamad Al-Montashari won after helping his country to a fourth straight World Cup finals and his club, Al Ittihad, retain the Asian Champions League. But his triumph was overshadowed by the Asian Football Confederation's decision to overlook their top performers.

The list of candidates looked stronger than ever. South Korea's Park Ji-sung was the obvious favourite, having impressed for PSV Eindhoven in the UEFA Champions League and won the Double in Holland before making a high-profile move to Manchester United; his compatriot Lee Young-pyo was also part of PSV's successful team and made a fine start to his spell at Tottenham; Ali Karimi, last year's winner, made his mark on the Bundesliga with Bayern Munich following several seasons with Al Ahli in the United Arab Emirates; and Japanese duo Shunsuke Nakamura and Hidetoshi Nakata were going some way towards restoring their reputations with Celtic and Bolton respectively.

However, that was of little consequence in the eyes of the AFC as only players who were prepared to travel to the awards in Kuala Lumpur would be considered. And with the confederation insisting that all three players on the final shortlist appear, that meant a 12-hour flight to Malaysia from Europe with no guarantee of success. So it was no surprise when the final shortlist was announced that none of Asia's finest players were included. Instead, it comprised Al-Montashari, compatriot striker Sami Al-Jaber and Uzbekistan and Kyiv Dynamo forward Maksim Shatskikh – all good players but without the recent track record or profile of those excluded.

The list went down to two when Al-Jaber failed to appear in Malaysia for a press conference the day before the ceremony, thus ruling him out.

Al-Montashari's success rang hollow and the feeling was that the confederation had shot itself in the foot. With the perfect opportunity to promote the virtues of Asian football, it chose to honour a player about whom those outside the Gulf knew little.

However, confederation president Mohamed Bin Hammam insisted the award would be the same next year. "If they don't come they won't get it," he said. "The night is designed to celebrate Asia's Player of the Year. There were more than 400 participants at our ceremony. Imagine if they all turned up and the chief guest didn't. Our reputation would be damaged."

Michael Church

Sealed with a kiss…Hamad Al-Montashari takes the award but many pundits believe there were far worthier recipients

ASIA ROUND-UP

● Champions Dalian Shide confirmed their rise back to the top of CHINESE football by beating Shandong Luneng in the FA Cup Final. Ma Shuai scored the only goal. Dalian will be joined in next year's Asian Champions League by Shanghai Shenhua, who finished second in the Super League. Wuhan Huanghelou, Second Division champions last year, won the Super League Cup, beating the 2004 League champions Shenzhen Jianlibao 3-1 on aggregate in the Final.

● Pakhtakor won the UZBEK Cup for a fifth straight year, defeating Neftchi 1-0 in the Final.

● IRAN midfielder Javad Nekounam has spurned a move to Europe to join United Arab Emirates champions Al Wahda from Tehran's Paas club. The 25-year-old has signed a six-month contract.

Michael Church & Azam Mahmood

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That's one…Thailand's Teerathep Winothai (right) scores the first of his hat-trick against Vietnam

Seven up for Thais

SOUTH-EAST ASIAN GAMES

THAILAND CONTINUED their dominance of the South-east Asian Games when scooping gold for the seventh finals running. A hat-trick from Teerathep Winothai gave Chanvit Polchivin's team 3-0 win over Vietnam in the Final, staged in the Filipino city of Bacolod. Teerathep also scored twice in the 3-1 semi-final win over Malaysia, who went on to beat Indonesia 1-0 in the bronze-medal game. "All the hard work over the past six months paid off this evening," Polchivin said. "Thailand were better than Vietnam in all departments and deserved to win."

Michael Church

Rech double sinks Sydney

OCEANIA

A SUPERB 25-YARD drive by Brazilian Fernando Rech seven minutes from full-time gave Adelaide United a 3-2 win over Sydney FC to put them five points clear at the top of AUSTRALIA'S A League. Rech had given Adelaide the lead, with Carl Veart making it 2-0, but veteran Japanese forward Kazuyoshi Miura scored twice to pull the sides level.

Sydney, for whom ex-Manchester United forward Dwight Yorke excelled in an unfamiliar playmaking role, stayed second but only above Newcastle Jets on goals scored.

● Champions Auckland City led the table in NEW ZEALAND after six games, though only on goal difference from Youngheart Manawatu.

● Sobou notched their fifth successive championship in PAPUA NEW GUINEA when defeating Cosmos 4-2 in the Final.

● Suva retained their top-flight status in FIJI after overcoming Tailevu-Naitasiri in the relegation/promotion play-off. Both legs were goalless and Suva had to wait until the 18th minute of extra-time before Petero Daunisaka put them ahead. Substitute Josefa Masilagi added a second to ensure the capital side's survival.

Paul Moon

Gamba snatch first title

JAPAN

GAMBA OSAKA won their first J.League championship on an extraordinary final day when any one of five clubs – separated by two points at the start – could have triumphed.

Gamba went into their game at Kawasaki Frontale having lost their previous three and thus ceded top spot to city rivals Cerezo by a point. However, with both Osaka sides drawing at half-time in the last round (Cerezo were home to FC Tokyo), third-placed Urawa Reds were in line to take the title since they led Albirex Niigata comfortably.

However, although Reds ran out 4-0 winners, Gamba rallied to beat Kawasaki 4-2, while Cerezo were pegged back to 2-2 having retaken the lead shortly after the break. The other two contenders, Kashima Antlers and JEF United Ichihara, also won their final games, but it was not enough.

Gamba's title was a victory for attacking football, since they scored 82 goals in 34 matches. Brazilian striker Araujo was League top scorer with 33, while Masashi Oguro and Fernandinho, another Brazilian, hit 23 between them. But Gamba were shaky at the back, conceding 58 goals, the League's fourth highest tally. This could be a worry next season since Araujo is moving back to Brazil at New Year.

Gamba's triumph was also a first in the League for Akira Nishino, the former Olympic team coach.

Tokyo Verdy 1969, the Emperor's Cup holders, were relegated along with Vissel Kobe, and replaced by Kyoto Purple Sanga and Avispa Fukuoka.

Mike Plastow & Yumiko Nagae

Flying the flag…Gamba Osaka unfurl the championship pennant after their final-day triumph

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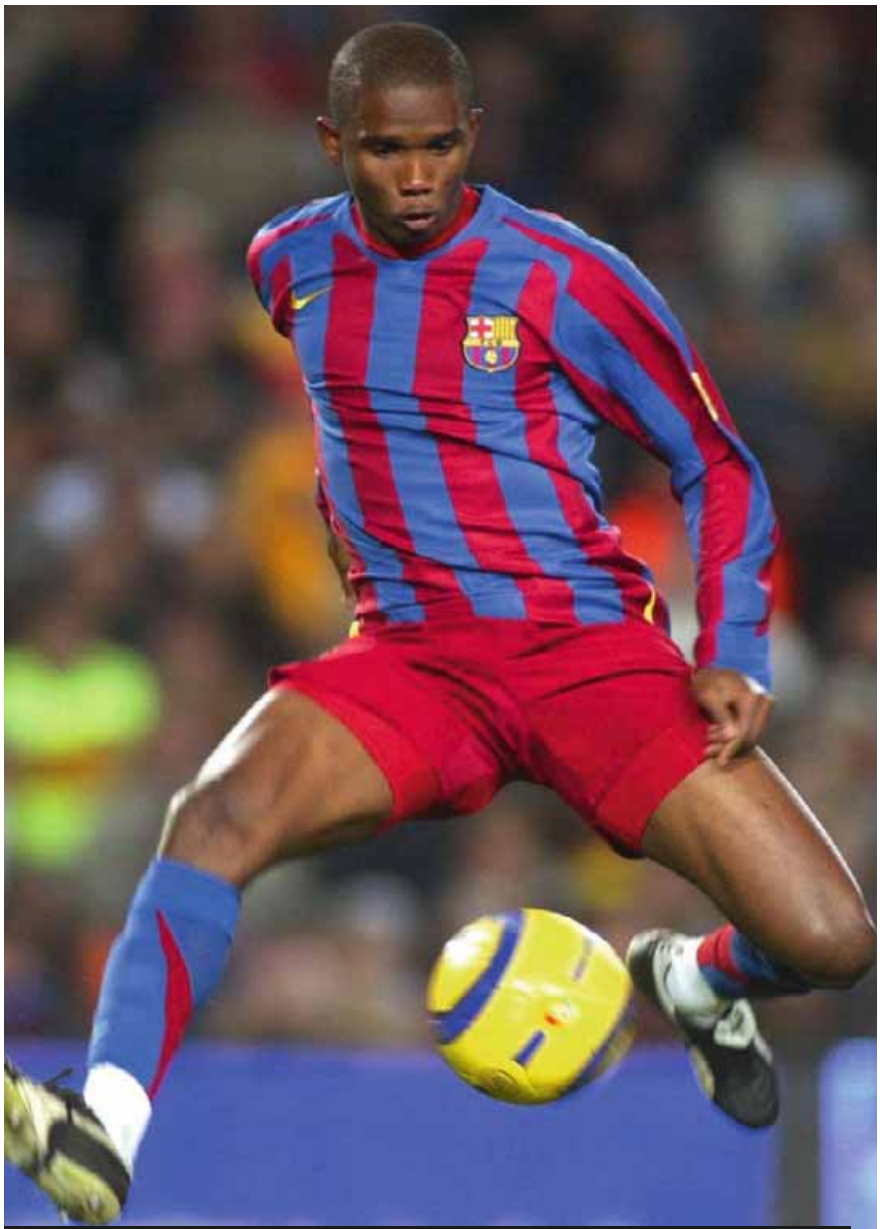

King Samuel?…Eto'o faces fierce competition from Didier Drogba and Michael Essien for Africa's top player award

AFRICAN PLAYER OF THE YEAR AWARD

Eto'o in fight for hat-trick

CAMEROON'S SAMUEL ETO'O, one of the three-man shortlist for FIFA's World Player of the Year award, is also in the running for a third consecutive African title after being named in the final five candidates. But the Barcelona striker faces stiff competition from Chelsea's Ivorian forward Didier Drogba and Ghanaian midfielder Michael Essien for the continental prize, which is to be handed out in Abuja, Nigeria, in January. Togo striker Emmanuel Adebayor and Morocco forward Marouane Chamakh are the other contenders.

Eto'o finished among the top scorers in the Spanish League last season, his 24 goals helping Barcelona to the championship, and has also shown good form this term, notably in the 3-0 victory over Real Madrid. But his efforts for Cameroon were not enough to earn them a World Cup place – unlike Drogba and Essien, who both inspired their respective countries to the finals and for the first time. Drogba hit nine qualifying goals and also won the English Premier League and League Cup. Essien also hit vital World Cup goals and was a major part of Lyon's run to a fourth consecutive French League title. The Ghanaian also won the French Player of the Season award before joining Chelsea in August.

Adebayor hit 10 goals for Togo as they also reached the World Cup finals for the first time, while Chamakh has shown excellent form for his club, Bordeaux, and country, although Morocco failed to reach next summer's Germany shindig.

The continent's 52 national team coaches will now be asked to vote, although last year fewer than half bothered to return their ballot forms.

Mark Gleeson

ROUND-UP

● RWANDA have appointed Gilbert Kanyankore as national coach. He replaces Swede Roger Palmgren, fired after the team failed to win a single game during his 12 months in charge.

● KENYA were kicked out of the Rwanda-staged East and Central African Senior Challenge (CECAFA) Cup after the players refused to travel to the tournament because they claimed they were still owed match fees of £3,200 each. The FA managed to get a makeshift squad to Rwanda, but by the time they arrived, a new schedule had been drawn up that excluded Kenya.

● St George won the Super Cup in ETHIOPIA, beating Awassa City 4-0 on aggregate in the Final.

● Veteran international midfielder Bilel Dziri has been named ALGERIA'S Footballer of the Year. French coach Jean-Yves Chay has taken charge of title-chasing JS Kabylie for the second time.

● Stuart Baxter has finally succumbed to pressure, resigning as SOUTH AFRICA coach with six months left on his contract following the failure to qualify for the World Cup finals. His temporary replacement is veteran Romanian coach Ted Dumitru, who will lead South Africa at the Nations Cup in January.

● Carlos Alhinho has returned to ANGOLA, where he has twice served as national coach, to take over at leading club side Petro Atletico. AS Aviacao, who lost their League title after three successive wins, found some consolation by beating InterClube in the Cup Final. Brazilian Luis Mariano is the new coach of Progresso Sambizanga.

Angola were the last of a record eight countries to put a bid in to host the 2010 Nations Cup finals. The others are Libya, Mozambique, Namibia, Nigeria, Senegal, Zimbabwe and Equatorial Guinea/ Gabon (a joint bid).

● GUINEA won the Amilcar Cabral Cup as hosts, their Under-23 side beating Senegal's Under-23s 1-0 in the Final. Pascal Baruzakas scored the goal to give his country their fifth win in the tournament for west African countries.

● League leaders Enyimba stayed on course to do the Double in NIGERIA after beating Lobi Stars 6-5 on penalties in the Cup Final after a goalless draw.

Mark Gleeson

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Travelling man…Troussier has a five-year deal with Morocco

Troussier looks to work his magic

MOROCCO

PHILIPPE TROUSSIER, nicknamed the "white witch doctor" because of his previous success in African football, is back in the continent as Morocco's national coach. The charismatic Frenchman, who steered Nigeria to the 1998 World Cup and then was in charge of South Africa at that tournament, has signed a five-year contract and will oversee the running of all Morocco's national teams. It is a lucrative appointment, with Troussier earning about £325,000 a year. The 50-year-old replaces Badou Zaki, who resigned in October after the team's failure to qualify for the World Cup.

Troussier has briefly worked in Morocco before, leading Second Division FUS Rabat to triumph in the Throne Cup in 1995, and has kept a home in the country ever since. The well-travelled coach has also led the national teams of Ivory Coast, Burkina Faso, Japan – at the 2002 World Cup – and Qatar. Most recently, Troussier was in charge of Marseille, getting the sack last summer after failing to steer the club into the Champions League placings in the French League.

Leading club side Raja Casablanca fired Romanian coach Alexandre Moldovan after their elimination in the African Champions League semi-finals. He is replaced by Argentinian Luis-Oscar Fullone, back for a second spell at the club.

Mark Gleeson

FAR too good for Dolphin

AFRICAN CONFEDERATION CUP

MOROCCO'S FORCES ARMEES ROYALES won the second edition of the African Confederation Cup after an emphatic home victory over Nigerian champions Dolphin FC in the Final. The Rabat side had limited their opponents to a 1-0 win in the first leg, in Port Harcourt, and comfortably saw them off 3-0 in the return.

It is FAR's second continental trophy, having won the Champions Cup in 1985. In 1997, they were runners-up in the African Cup-winners Cup, which was amalgamated into the Confederation Cup when it was launched in 2004.

Imposing goalkeeper Tarek El-Jarmouni did his chances of going to the African Nations Cup finals with Morocco no harm with a virtuoso performance in the first leg. He made several difficult saves in the tight game and was only beaten when a botched clearance in the 85th minute allowed substitute Bola Bello to score from close range.

The second leg was one-sided. Man of the match Adil Serraj put FAR ahead on aggregate with two first-half goals, the first a close-range header after 10 minutes, the second on the stroke of half-time following a defensive error. Ahmed Ajraoui wrapped up the game with a 65th-minute header.

Both finalists had started off their continental campaigns this year in the Champions League, but dropped down into Africa's secondary club tournament after losing in the final knockout round before the group stage.

FAR easily topped their Confederation Cup group, dropping only two points in six games, to book their place in the Final. Dolphin were also unbeaten in their group, seeing off the challenge of Egyptian side Ismaili by holding them to a 0-0 draw on the last matchday to secure top spot. It was the Nigerians' first appearance in a continental Final. Ghana's Hearts of Oak won the first Confederation Cup, beating compatriots Asante Kotoko on penalties after a 2-2 aggregate draw.

Caught you!…FAR (in white) came from behind in the tie to beat Dolphin 3-1 on aggregate

Mark Gleeson

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We'll never forget you…fans pay tribute to the Manchester United idol before the game against West Bromwich at Old Trafford

George Best: man and myth

David Conn reflects on the reaction to the death of football's "flawed genius"

THE WALL-TO-WALL media mourning of George Best got going days before he actually died, with "live" television bulletins from outside the hospital on the great man's non-progress, delivered by reporters who didn't seem embarrassed at all to be doing it, just pleased to get the gig.

When his end finally arrived, the cameras scrambled to broadcast a moving, troubling reaction from George's family and old friends. Denis Law, team-mate from the Manchester United wonder years before the drink and rot set in, had been by his bed through the night, still loyal, saying his final goodbye to the 59-year-old alcoholic using his dressing-room nickname, "Besty".

Calum, George's son by his first wife Angie, who divorced him because of the drinking and chaos, told the world he'd lost "a wonderful man" as well as his dad. Then there was George's own father, Dickie, 87, who still lives in the modest corner of Belfast from where he sent his boy wonder at 15 to light up and be ruined by the glories and trappings of United in the 1960s. Dickie lost his wife, Ann, also to alcohol – she is said not to have drunk at all until she was 40, and took to it to cope with the pressure of George's enormous fame.

Dickie, raw anger pouring through the cracks, burst out, to the battery of cameras: "Now can I ask you to leave us alone and let us grieve!"

The public, though, had to have its celebrity-remembrance ritual, minted after the death of Princess Diana in 1997; so George's passing was the first item on the news, there was a pained message from the Prime Minister about what a great player George had been, and interviews with ordinary people, United fans, saying how much they'd loved watching George play, how he lit up their childhoods. Outside Old Trafford, the scarves, shirts, badges and flowers sprawled into a shrine.

At United's next home game, a League Cup tie against West Bromwich Albion, Old Trafford

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wrapped itself in a huge hug, the players from the 1968 European Cup victory stepping on to the pitch, the tannoy playing *Belfast Boy* – the 1970 hit that celebrated George – the crowd in full song. After the bitterness and alienation of the Glazer family's takeover, United embraced the chance to reconnect with their heritage, and it seemed sharply significant that the Glazers, sending their apologies from Florida, weren't there.

The club's statement also seemed to relish recalling the intimacy of the past: "George Best was one of the greatest footballers of all time, naturally athletic, tough, confident and blessed with genius."

Which, of course, is true. But it was striking so few of the reactions from in and around football even mentioned the sad collapse of that star in the 30 years afterwards. Few addressed the reality of his drinking, broken marriages, wife-beating, bankruptcy, imprisonment for drink-driving and the fact that he had drunk himself to death after having a liver transplant three years ago.

There were few attempts to reflect on any of that, or, as usually follows a tragic death, draw lessons from it. We were thrown the inevitable cliche that George was a "flawed genius". Nobody even said that it was a shame he drank so much.

Sublime moments

The football world, it seemed, didn't want to know about the man, just celebrate the footballer, his impish, sublime moments on the field, sanctified by the bits of TV we have. His wondrous chip as a mop-haired kid against Chelsea, the "El Beatle" performance at Benfica, his out-running of Ron "Chopper" Harris to score, in colour now, also against Chelsea, the six goals against Northampton, and the one at a sun-kissed Old Trafford when Best seemed to run round the whole Sheffield United team before planting the ball off the far post into the net and looking awed himself by the scale of the talent he was shortly afterwards to abandon.

One detail outside the hospital went unremarked, perhaps unnoticed. For all the beautiful women Best worked his way through in his life, inspiring awe and envy in lads everywhere, there were none there when he died, apart from his sister Barbara. A son, yes, whom George did not largely bring up, a loyal father, his agent and friend Phil Hughes, old team-mates, but none of the many women who'd loved him but had to leave him. It isn't long ago that George's drinking and shagging were being celebrated by the lad mags, until his liver transplant and revelations of hitting his second wife, Alex, made it too seedy even for them. Still, when he died, the newspapers trotted out Best's old line about spending all his money on booze, birds and fast cars: "The rest I squandered."

But that seemed misguided and pathetic, not winningly brazen, set against the death-bed image Best authorised Hughes to release, showing the sporting icon yellow and raddled, apparently to warn others not to live as he had done.

Perhaps the women weren't there because they'd lived with all that, with the shambolic drunkenness, gambling and occasional violence, and despaired because they couldn't help or change him. Angie talked publicly about this some years ago, how she had had to protect the young Calum from it all, push George away and ultimately divorce him.

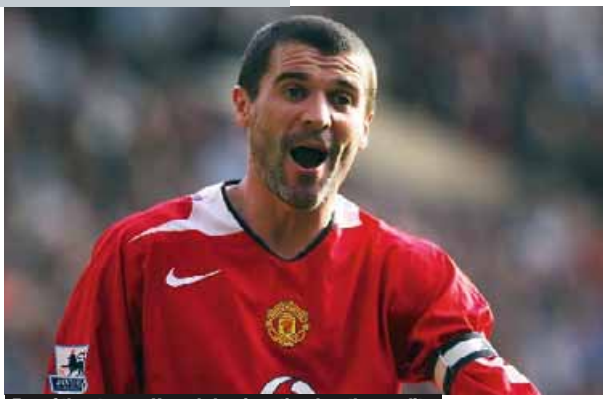
Football people, of course, took an entirely different tack. When he died, it was all about how they felt when they saw him play. In Best's case, that might seem dignified, skating over 30 years of life, but it can be cruel, too, the game's canonisation of its players, frozen in their twenties or thirties.

Johnny Giles, a former United team-mate of George, the only one to leave Matt Busby's club and still achieve greatness, once described the moment he realised the limits of football fans' adoration. Giles and Billy Bremner scrapped and schemed Leeds United into their most successful period, winning the League championship under Don Revie. When Giles retired, he had little money, no job to go to, four children to support, and the club did nothing for him. That, he said, was the most shattering moment of his life, when he suddenly grew up.

"Before that, all I cared about was the next football match, which is pretty immature, when you think about it, for a 30-year-old man," he said. "The fans are warm, they love you as a player, but when you've finished, they don't really want to know what happens to you as a person."

The reaction to George Best's death reminded me of that lament. Nobody in football wanted to think about 30 dirty years of real life, what might have caused it, whether George might have been helped. Instead, the game wanted some action replays, of the patterns he painted on muddy fields a long time ago. Football likes its heroes mythic, not real or over 35. Grown-up life is too difficult. It's probably a boy thing.

MEDIA WATCH



Eye of the storm…Keane's leaving stirred up the pundits

Roy Keane's shock departure from Manchester United

"Manchester United's season went from bad to worse last night when Roy Keane castigated his team-mates in an interview so explosive that Sir Alex Ferguson and chief executive David Gill immediately banned it from being shown on the club's in-house television station."
● Daniel Taylor reports the incident that started the crisis in *The Guardian* on November 1

"Roy Keane has left Manchester United by mutual consent. A statement released by the club confirmed their long-serving captain has departed with immediate effect after it became clear that his future at the club was untenable."
● It's the crunch on November 18, detailed by *The Times Online*

"It's a big surprise to let him go in the middle of the season. It looked like he was a bit upset recently. Why, I don't know."
● Arsene Wenger puts in his tuppence-worth on BBC Radio Five Live on November 19

"Any football fans logging on to the official Manchester United website last night would have been forgiven for thinking Roy Keane had gone to the great changing room in the sky. 'Roy Keane, Manchester United, 1993-2005,' said the picture caption."
● William Scholes in *The Irish News*

"I think he has been pushed. I have said it for years, that if you fall out with Alex Ferguson, you are on your way out. I hear they have given him a testimonial. Big deal."
● Former United manager Tommy Docherty suggests the "mutual consent" line was merely a smokescreen in November 19's *Daily Star*

"People feel he will just walk into management and, hey presto, it will come easy to him because he was such a good player. I think the opposite, but in the immediate future he could go to a club – Celtic, Manchester City or Blackburn, say – and make a real difference for the rest of the season."
● Niall Quinn in Ireland's *Sunday Tribune* on November 20

"Controlled aggression, compounded by splendid technique and tactical flair, has always been the essence of his game, as well as his personality. Sometimes, Keane's behaviour can be indefensible, as in the cruel case of Alf Inge Haaland, the former Norway midfield player. But that is the man, take it or leave it. And now the big question is, who will take him?"
● Brian Glanville on *worldsoccer.com* on November 22

"Keane has rejected an offer from Stalybridge Celtic. The Conference North side's player-manager John Reed said he was prepared to step aside if the former Manchester United captain came to Bower Fold."
● *The Daily Telegraph* reveals Keane will not go just anywhere, also on November 22

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TALENT SCOUT

TOMORROW'S STARS TODAY

Fernando GAGO

Boca junior in the Redondo mould

THERE ARE SOME players who reveal their nationality by the way they go about their business on the field. Fernando Gago is one. His style of play has "made in Argentina" written all over it.

Gago is what is known in his country as a classic No 5 – a tall, imposing figure who protects the defence by operating in front of the centre-backs, but is much more than a holding midfielder. He is, in fact, the hub of the team. Everything goes through him, and he dictates the rhythm of the game with his range and choice of passes. So it was with Nestor Rossi, Antonio Rattin and Fernando Redondo – and so it is with Gago at Boca Juniors.

Being mentioned in the same breath as Redondo is a source of delight for the 19-year-old. "Redondo was my idol and my role model," he says. "He was spectacular, especially for his presence in midfield. I'm very proud to be compared to him."

Gago is right-footed but, that difference apart, the comparison is valid. He has the same erect bearing – head up to survey the options – the same accurate passes, and, thanks to a long, loping stride, the same capacity to link up with the attack.

So good is Gago's constructive play that some would like to see him further up the field. The teenager is not in favour, saying: "It would mean having my back to goal, and I like to have the play in front of me. That's why I'm happiest as a No 5 – it allows me to see the game more clearly and have much more of the ball."

The position has considerable defensive responsibilities, which do not come naturally to Gago. But he has been helped in this by the return to Boca from Europe of Sebastian Battaglia, whose defensive awareness allows the youngster to break forward.

Battaglia has been impressed with his new midfield colleague. "Gago has good technique and vision," he says, "and he's adding more sacrifice to his game" – meaning that the youngster is working harder to win possession, using his long legs to slide the ball away from his opponent before picking himself up to set moves in motion.

Gago made his Boca debut at the end of 2004 but quickly became a first-choice, replacing veteran Raul Cascini. European clubs were alerted to his promise at the World Youth Cup in Holland last June, where he was especially impressive during the win over Nigeria in the Final. Atletico Madrid have been following his progress, and there has been inevitable speculation linking him with Chelsea.

Gago makes no secret of his preference for Spain, but adds: "It will be important to stay with Boca for a while longer, not only to win titles but also to establish myself and develop as a player."

But economic realities could pull him across the Atlantic faster than he intended. These days, the selling of promising players to Europe is as characteristic of Argentinian football as the upright figure of the classic No 5.

Tim Vickery

FACT FILE

Club Boca Juniors
Country Argentina
Born April 10, 1986, in Ciudadela
Honours World Youth Cup 2005

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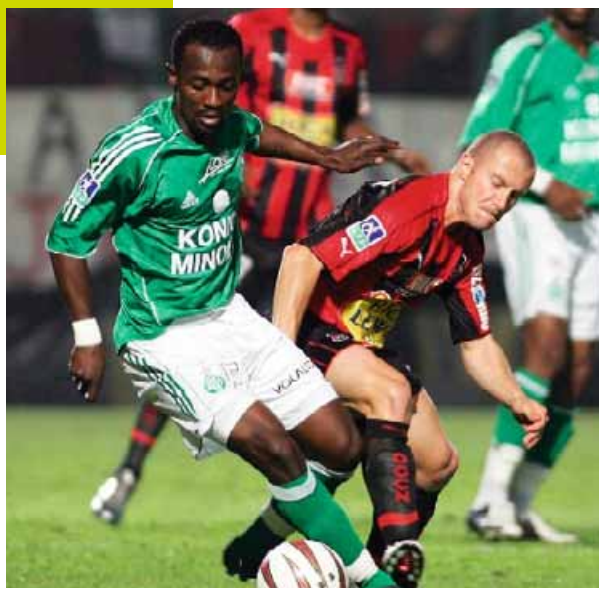
Didier ZOKORA



Midfield enforcer par excellence

IF SAINT-ETIENNE'S Ivorian international Didier Zokora is rated the foremost defensive midfielder in the French League, he must be good. After all, it is awash with talent in that department – Tiago, Mahamadou Diarra and Benoit Pedretti at Lyon, Alou Diarra (Lens), Lucas Bernardi (Monaco), Mathieu Bodmer (Lille), Rio Mavuba (Bordeaux) and Lorik Cana (Marseille), to name just a few.

But Zokora tops the lot, with his great intelligence, athleticism and robustness making him a truly outstanding midfield enforcer. The 25-year-old's rise to pre-eminence in the position is all the more remarkable since he was formerly a central defender – at top Ivorian club ASEC Abidjan, where he began his career, and Belgian side Genk (2000-2004). But some three years ago, Ivory Coast coach Robert Nouzaret decided he would be better employed further forward and it worked like a charm. Although Genk continued to play him at the back, when Saint-Etienne beat off competition from Auxerre, Nantes, Strasbourg and Lille to sign Zokora in summer 2004, they made it clear they saw him only as a sweeper in front of the back-line.

"Reports of his performances with Ivory Coast were excellent and when we saw him in the flesh, we were convinced no one was exaggerating," said Saint-Etienne president Bernard Caiazzo. "He was a monster on the pitch, such a competitor. And he could use the ball too."

Zokora, known as "Le Maestro" in France, is another graduate of the soccer school set up in Abidjan by ex-France and Nice playmaker Jean-Marc Guillou. It has also produced Arsenal defender Kolo Toure and Lens striker Aruna Dindane.

"I owe everything to Monsieur Guillou," says Zokora. "He let me join his school when I was 13 and he made me an adult and a professional sportsman. I can never thank him enough."

Nick Bidwell

FACT FILE

- Club Saint-Etienne (Fra)
- Country Ivory Coast
- Born December 14, 1980, in Abidjan
- Previous clubs ASEC Abidjan, Genk (Blg)
- International debut January 2002, v Nigeria
- International caps 22 (0 gls)
- Honours Belgian League 2002

Ebi SMOLAREK

Polish striker enjoying knees-up with Dortmund

EVERYONE WITH BORUSSIA DORTMUND'S best interests at heart must be hoping that the knees of their free-scoring Polish forward Euzebiusz "Ebi" Smolarek are made of strong stuff. In the past six years, no fewer than 10 Dortmund players have required surgery to repair damaged cruciate knee ligaments, and the club would be in serious trouble if the same fate befell Smolarek, scorer of 11 goals in 15 starts this season.

The 24-year-old, normally used as a right-sided forward, was switched to the centre of attack earlier this season when giant Czech striker Jan Koller fell victim to – you've guessed it – torn knee ligaments. And Smolarek soon silenced those pundits who suggested he would struggle in his new role, that he lacked the technical polish, muscle and aerial ability to effectively lead the line, and that he was not a proven goalscorer.

On the evidence of what the Pole had done at Dortmund since joining them from Feyenoord in January 2005, it was not an overly harsh assessment. But what his detractors had overlooked were the qualities that had brought him into the professional game: his irrepressible enthusiasm, speed and incredible energy levels.

"I have to admit that I didn't for one moment expect Ebi to score as many this season," says coach Bert Van Marwijk. "Suddenly, everything has clicked for him as a striker. He's getting himself in good goalscoring positions, he's confident and he's composed. Dortmund is the perfect club for him. The fans here love a player who is totally committed."

Smolarek is certainly a chip off the old block. His father is former Poland winger Wlodimierz Smolarek, who starred at the 1982 and 1986 World Cup and was his son's first coach in Feyenoord's youth team.

Nick Bidwell

FACT FILE

- Club Borussia Dortmund (Ger)
- Country Poland
- Born January 9, 1981, in Lodz
- Previous club Feyenoord (Hol)
- International debut February 2002, v Northern Ireland
- International caps 10 (3 gls)

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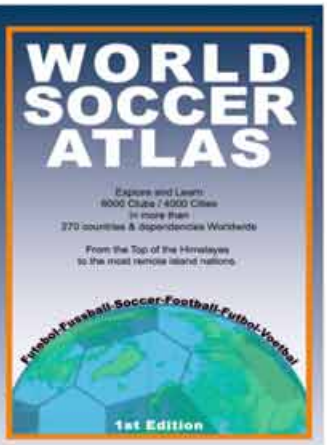

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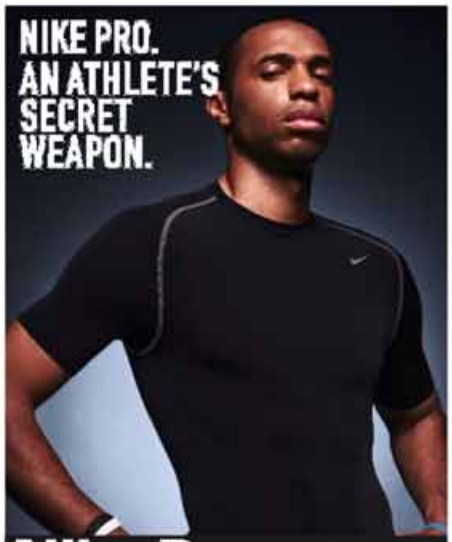

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WORLD SERVICE

2006 WORLD CUP FINALS DRAW

MATCH SCHEDULE

GROUP A

Fri, June 9	Germany v Costa Rica	Munich	18:00
Fri, June 9	Poland v Ecuador	Gelsenkirchen	21:00
Wed, June 14	Germany v Poland	Dortmund	21:00
Thu, June 15	Ecuador v Costa Rica	Hamburg	15:00
Tue, June 20	Ecuador v Germany	Berlin	16:00
Tue, June 20	Costa Rica v Poland	Hanover	16:00

GROUP B

Sat, June 10	England v Paraguay	Frankfurt	15:00
Sat, June 10	Trinidad & Tobago v Sweden	Dortmund	18:00
Thu, June 15	England v Trinidad & Tobago	Nuremberg	18:00
Thu, June 15	Sweden v Paraguay	Berlin	21:00
Tue, June 20	Sweden v England	Cologne	21:00
Tue, June 20	Paraguay v Trinidad & Tobago	Kaiserslautern	21:00

GROUP C

Sat, June 10	Argentina v Ivory Coast	Hamburg	21:00
Sun, June 11	Serbia & Montenegro v Holland	Leipzig	15:00
Fri, June 16	Argentina v Serbia & Montenegro	Gelsenkirchen	15:00
Fri, June 16	Holland v Ivory Coast	Stuttgart	18:00
Wed, June 21	Holland v Argentina	Frankfurt	21:00
Wed, June 21	Ivory Coast v Serbia & Montenegro	Munich	21:00

GROUP D

Sun, June 11	Mexico v Iran	Nuremberg	18:00
Sun, June 11	Angola v Portugal	Cologne	21:00
Fri, June 16	Mexico v Angola	Hanover	21:00
Sat, June 17	Portugal v Iran	Frankfurt	15:00
Wed, June 21	Portugal v Mexico	Gelsenkirchen	16:00
Wed, June 21	Iran v Angola	Leipzig	16:00

GROUP E

Mon, June 12	United States v Czech Republic	Gelsenkirchen	18:00
Mon, June 12	Italy v Ghana	Hanover	21:00
Sat, June 17	Czech Republic v Ghana	Cologne	18:00
Sat, June 17	Italy v United States	Kaiserslautern	21:00
Thu, June 22	Czech Republic v Italy	Hamburg	16:00
Thu, June 22	Ghana v United States	Nuremberg	16:00

GROUP F

Mon, June 12	Australia v Japan	Kaiserslautern	15:00
Tue, June 13	Brazil v Croatia	Berlin	21:00
Sun, June 18	Japan v Croatia	Nuremberg	15:00
Sun, June 18	Brazil v Australia	Munich	18:00
Thu, June 22	Japan v Brazil	Dortmund	21:00
Thu, June 22	Croatia v Australia	Stuttgart	21:00

GROUP G

Tue, June 13	South Korea v Togo	Frankfurt	15:00
Tue, June 13	France v Switzerland	Stuttgart	18:00
Sun, June 18	France v South Korea	Leipzig	21:00
Mon, June 19	Togo v Switzerland	Dortmund	15:00
Fri, June 23	Togo v France	Cologne	21:00
Fri, June 23	Switzerland v South Korea	Hanover	21:00

GROUP H

Wed, June 14	Spain v Ukraine	Leipzig	15:00
Wed, June 14	Tunisia v Saudi Arabia	Munich	18:00
Mon, June 19	Saudi Arabia v Ukraine	Hamburg	18:00
Mon, June 19	Spain v Tunisia	Stuttgart	21:00
Fri, June 23	Saudi Arabia v Spain	Kaiserslautern	16:00
Fri, June 23	Ukraine v Tunisia	Berlin	16:00

SECOND ROUND

Sat, June 24	Gp A 1st v Gp B 2nd	Munich	17:00	(SR1)
Sat, June 24	Gp C 1st v Gp D 2nd	Leipzig	21:00	(SR2)
Sun, June 25	Gp B 1st v Gp A 2nd	Stuttgart	17:00	(SR3)
Sun, June 25	Gp D 1st v Gp C 2nd	Nuremberg	21:00	(SR4)
Mon, June 26	Gp E 1st v Gp F 2nd	Kaiserslautern	17:00	(SR5)
Mon, June 26	Gp G 1st v Gp H 2nd	Cologne	21:00	(SR6)
Tue, June 27	Gp F 1st v Gp E 2nd	Dortmund	17:00	(SR7)
Tue, June 27	Gp H 1st v Gp G 2nd	Hanover	21:00	(SR8)

QUARTER-FINALS

Fri, June 30	Winners SR1 v Winners SR2	Berlin	17:00	(QF1)
Fri, June 30	Winners SR5 v Winners SR6	Hamburg	21:00	(QF2)
Sat, July 1	Winners SR3 v Winners SR4	Gelsenkirchen	17:00	(QF3)
Sat, July 1	Winners SR7 v Winners SR8	Frankfurt	21:00	(QF4)

SEMI-FINALS

Tue, July 4	Winners QF1 v Winners QF2	Dortmund	21:00
Wed, July 5	Winners QF3 v Winners QF4	Munich	21:00

THIRD-PLACE PLAY-OFF

Sat, July 8		Stuttgart	21:00

FINAL

Sun, July 9		Berlin	20:00

Kick-off times are local

EXCLUSIVE

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Pele's reaction

"No excuses: all the top teams should perform in Germany"

NO EXCUSES FOR anyone. Not injuries, not fatigue, not tactical naivety. FIFA's success in enforcing a four-week break before the finals for all the players involved has removed all those excuses used in past tournaments.

That suits the European nations, most of whose players staggered into the Korea/Japan World Cup still leg-weary from their clubs' championship campaigns. But they should be warned: it will also suit Brazil, because – for a change – Carlos Alberto Parreira will have had time to prepare properly with his Europe-based players.

That is crucial. Back in 1970, for instance, Brazil had a potential problem because myself and Tostao played the same role in attack with our clubs; similarly, Rivelino and Gerson used to do the same midfield job with their clubs. But when you have time to work with the players and prepare properly for a tournament you can sort out these issues to make a good team even better.

We were fortunate in 1970 because we had played and worked together regularly for a full year leading up to the World Cup. But it is not always like that. Sometimes a coach has excellent players but does not have enough time to ensure he gets the best out of them.

I am not saying it will be easy for Brazil. Quite the opposite. The fact that Brazil are the holders and favourites means all their opponents raise their game to another level because they want to spring a big upset.

All in all, I thought the draw was a good one because we avoided Portugal, Holland and the Czech Republic.

Beforehand, Parreira asked me not to put the Czech Republic in Brazil's group because he did not want to face them in the first round! That was OK because the Czechs went into Italy's group instead.

Later I met Zico, and he said the same on Japan's behalf. I am sorry I could not help him. But Zico did point out that the last time Japan met Brazil, at the Confederations Cup last summer, the Japanese played very well, and Zico thinks they could have won had it not been for a mistake by the referee.

Now, finally, they have beaten Uruguay, but I still see Croatia as more difficult opponents for Brazil. The Croats, when they are not involved in the World Cup – either qualifying or the finals – are playing in the European Championship, which is far more competitive and difficult than anything Australia come up against during the non-World Cup years.

The only unusual problem I see facing Parreira is that he is the only coach with too many good players, particularly in attack. At least it means he can replace any player not quite at top level. All things being equal, I believe he will start with Ronaldo and Ronaldinho. Then if, say, Ronaldo is out of shape, Parreira would have no problem bringing in Adriano.

'I thought the draw was a good one because Brazil avoided Portugal, Holland and the Czech Republic'

Australia will not be easy opponents, either, but I do not think they have the potential or international experience to go a long way. I know they have almost always won their qualifying group in Oceania but, of course, when they came up against "real" opposition such as Argentina and Uruguay in the play-off they always fell short.

Togetherness… Brazil coach Carlos Alberto Parreira will have more time with Europe-based players such as Cafu and Roberto Carlos

But football is a team game, and while everyone asks me about Brazil's attack it is also important not to concede goals. That is why I think the goalkeeper, Dida, will be one of our most important players.

Of course, we have six months to go before the finals and a lot can happen in that time, with players losing form or getting injured. But right now England appear to have serious potential; Italy are better than at the last three World Cups; and France – now they have their older players such as Zinedine Zidane back in the squad – have something to prove after the way they went out in the first round in Korea/Japan.

Lucky mascot

I think I am a lucky mascot for England. Seriously! I remember years ago going to England, seeing a very young Michael Owen and tipping him to be a World Cup success in France – which he was. A couple of years ago after I first saw Wayne Rooney, I told everyone how impressed I was – and then he, too, shone at Euro 2004 until he got injured.

Rooney can be one of the big stars of this World Cup. Technically, he is in a class of his own. Also, he never knows when he is beaten – and that is a crucial quality in a World Cup.

Other young players to watch include Lukas Podolski, the young German striker, and Leo Messi for Argentina. Messi is a little on the short side and not so strong, but he is very quick. Javier

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Going strong… England's Wayne Rooney never knows when he's beaten

Mascherano in midfield is another good young player for Argentina.

As for Germany, people often say that being hosts is a problem because of the level of expectation from home fans. But from what I have seen and heard, I do not believe the German fans expect too much of their team anyway, so this will not be a factor. In any case, Germany are always difficult opponents because of their strong mental attitude.

The one concern I have about Germany concerns all the changes they make from game to game. My preference is to stick with the same team, even if one particular player may not be in the best form.

I talked this over with Franz Beckenbauer and Lothar Matthaus and Jurgen Klinsmann, their coach. Klinsmann told me that he had to keep experimenting because the team was not working well enough, but that can be self-defeating. I think it's better to stick with the same team, even if performance and results are not initially what you want, otherwise the players never get to know one another and then everything becomes even more difficult.

Spain are not quite on the same level as these other European teams. Maybe they do not have so many big international names and Raul's injury may be a problem. But the coach, Luis Aragones, has them well organised. I admired that when I saw them play twice recently.

But of course the World Cup is about much more than South America and Europe. Japan and South Korea proved the point as co-hosts in 2002. Then, Japan reached the second round and the Koreans went on to the semi-finals. But this time I expect the roles to be reversed and for Japan to do better than Korea.

Zico is an experienced coach who knows all about playing in World Cups. The Japanese coaching staff work hard in preparing their players and the team can make qualifying for the second round very awkward for their opponents. Also, I think they have more experience internationally than the present Korean team.

One more reason: at the last World Cup, the Koreans had that fantastic support from their fans. Now, the atmosphere will be "normal" again, and Asian teams, when they go abroad, are just not the same.

Tough for Africans

The Africans will not find it easy, either. It's unfortunate for the image of African football in general that Cameroon, Nigeria and South Africa – who know what it means to play at a World Cup – will not be with us. I do not hold out much hope for the teams who have come through instead. Ghana have some useful players but are just not consistent enough.

No team can afford to let their concentration drop at a World Cup, even for a moment. Look at the United States, who played so well in Korea/Japan. They should have won their quarter-final against Germany, but they missed two easy chances before the end so they lost and the Germans went through instead.

Concentration and consistency are not issues only for the players. It's the same for the referees. FIFA must take more care than ever before to ensure that, for this World Cup, the referees and their assistants are properly prepared. In the past we have had too many costly mistakes. FIFA must guard against this because, somehow, a World Cup in Europe is always a physically tougher event. The referees need to be aware of that and be consistent and strong in the way they penalise dangerous tackles or diving or dissent.

Finally, when we were making the draw I was struck immediately by the fact that if Brazil reach the Final, they will play their last game where they played their first – in Berlin (they meet Croatia there in their opening group game). Nobody else picked that up at the time.

As to their potential opponents, if Brazil make the Final I will be happy whoever they are playing.

Pele, the official World Cup spokesman for MasterCard, was talking to Keir Radnedge

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WORLD CUP QUALIFIERS

PLAY-OFFS

Asia-CONCACAF

12.11.05 Trinidad & Tobago-Bahrain..... 1-1
16.11.05 Bahrain-Trinidad & Tobago..... 0-1
TRINIDAD & TOBAGO *2-1 on agg*

Oceania-South America

12.11.05 Uruguay-Australia..... 1-0
16.11.05 Australia-Uruguay.....(aet) 1-0
Agg 1-1. **AUSTRALIA** *4-2 on pens*

Europe

12.11.05 Norway-Czech Republic..... 0-1
16.11.05 Czech Republic-Norway..... 1-0
CZECH REPUBLIC *2-0 on agg*

12.11.05 Spain-Slovakia..... 5-1
16.11.05 Slovakia-Spain..... 1-1
SPAIN *6-2 on agg*

12.11.05 Switzerland-Turkey..... 2-0
16.11.05 Turkey-Switzerland..... 4-2
Agg 4-4. **SWITZERLAND** *on away gls*

Play-off winners qualified for finals

AFRICA

5 finals berths

Group 1

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
TOGO	10	7	2	1	20	8	23
Senegal	10	6	3	1	21	8	21
Zambia	10	6	1	3	16	10	19
Congo	10	3	1	6	10	14	10
Mali	10	2	2	6	11	14	8
Liberia	10	1	1	8	3	27	4

05.06.04 Senegal-Congo 2-0
05.06.04 Zambia-Togo 1-0
06.06.04 Liberia-Mali..... 1-0
19.06.04 Mali-Zambia..... 1-1
20.06.04 Congo-Liberia 3-0
20.06.04 Togo-Senegal..... 3-1
03.07.04 Senegal-Zambia..... 1-0
04.07.04 Congo-Mali 1-0
04.07.04 Liberia-Togo..... 0-0
04.09.04 Zambia-Liberia..... 1-0
05.09.04 Mali-Senegal..... 2-2
05.09.04 Togo-Congo..... 2-0
10.10.04 Congo-Zambia 2-3
10.10.04 Liberia-Senegal 0-3
10.10.04 Togo-Mali..... 1-0
26.03.05 Senegal-Liberia 6-1
26.03.05 Zambia-Congo 2-0
27.03.05 Mali-Togo..... 1-2
05.06.05 Congo-Senegal 0-0
05.06.05 Mali-Liberia..... 4-1
05.06.05 Togo-Zambia..... 4-1
18.06.05 Senegal-Togo..... 2-2
18.06.05 Zambia-Mali..... 2-1
19.06.05 Liberia-Congo 0-2
03.09.05 Mali-Congo 2-0
03.09.05 Zambia-Senegal..... 0-1
04.09.05 Togo-Liberia..... 3-0
01.10.05 Liberia-Zambia..... 0-5
08.10.05 Congo-Togo..... 2-3
08.10.05 Senegal-Mali..... 3-0

Group 2

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
GHANA	10	6	3	1	17	4	21
DR Congo	10	4	4	2	14	10	16
South Africa	10	5	1	4	12	14	16
Burkina Faso	10	4	1	5	14	13	13
Cape Verde Is	10	3	1	6	8	15	10
Uganda	10	2	2	6	6	15	8

05.06.04 Burkina Faso-Ghana 1-0
05.06.04 South Africa-Cape Verde Is 2-1
05.06.04 Uganda-DR Congo..... 1-0
19.06.04 Cape Verde Is-Uganda 1-0
20.06.04 DR Congo-Burkina Faso..... 3-2
20.06.04 Ghana-South Africa..... 3-0
03.07.04 Cape Verde Is-DR Congo..... 1-1
03.07.04 South Africa-Burkina Faso..... 2-0
03.07.04 Uganda-Ghana 1-1
04.09.04 Burkina Faso-Uganda 2-0
05.09.04 DR Congo-South Africa 1-0
05.09.04 Ghana-Cape Verde Is 2-0
09.10.04 Cape Verde Is-Burkina Faso..... 1-0
10.10.04 Ghana-DR Congo..... 0-0
10.10.04 Uganda-South Africa..... 0-1
26.03.05 Burkina Faso-Cape Verde Is..... 1-2
26.03.05 South Africa-Uganda..... 2-1
27.03.05 DR Congo-Ghana..... 1-1
04.06.05 Cape Verde Is-South Africa 1-2
05.06.05 DR Congo-Uganda..... 4-0
05.06.05 Ghana-Burkina Faso 2-1
18.06.05 Burkina Faso-DR Congo..... 2-0
18.06.05 South Africa-Ghana..... 0-2
18.06.05 Uganda-Cape Verde Is 1-0
03.09.05 Burkina Faso-South Africa..... 3-1
04.09.05 DR Congo-Cape Verde Is..... 2-1
04.09.05 Ghana-Uganda 2-0
08.10.05 Cape Verde Is-Ghana 0-4
08.10.05 South Africa-DR Congo 2-2
08.10.05 Uganda-Burkina Faso 2-2

Group 3

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
IVORY COAST	10	7	1	2	20	7	22
Cameroon	10	6	3	1	18	10	21
Egypt	10	5	2	3	26	15	17
Libya	10	3	3	4	8	10	12
Sudan	10	1	3	6	6	22	6
Benin	10	1	2	7	9	23	5

06.06.04 Cameroon-Benin..... 2-1
06.06.04 Ivory Coast-Libya..... 2-0
06.06.04 Sudan-Egypt 0-3
18.06.04 Libya-Cameroon 0-0
20.06.04 Benin-Sudan 1-1
20.06.04 Egypt-Ivory Coast..... 1-2
03.07.04 Sudan-Libya..... 0-1
04.07.04 Benin-Egypt 3-3
04.07.04 Cameroon-Ivory Coast 2-0
03.09.04 Libya-Benin..... 4-1
05.09.04 Egypt-Cameroon..... 3-2
05.09.04 Ivory Coast-Sudan 5-0
08.10.04 Libya-Egypt..... 2-1
09.10.04 Sudan-Cameroon..... 1-1
10.10.04 Benin-Ivory Coast 0-1
27.03.05 Cameroon-Sudan..... 2-1
27.03.05 Egypt-Libya..... 4-1
27.03.05 Ivory Coast-Benin 3-0
03.06.05 Libya-Ivory Coast 0-0
04.06.05 Benin-Cameroon..... 1-4
05.06.05 Egypt-Sudan 6-1
19.06.05 Cameroon-Libya 1-0
19.06.05 Ivory Coast-Egypt..... 2-0
17.08.05 Sudan-Benin 1-0
02.09.05 Libya-Sudan..... 0-0
04.09.05 Egypt-Benin 4-1
04.09.05 Ivory Coast-Cameroon 2-3
08.10.05 Cameroon-Egypt..... 1-1
08.10.05 Sudan-Ivory Coast 1-3
09.10.05 Benin-Libya..... 1-0

Group 4

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
ANGOLA	10	6	3	1	12	6	21
Nigeria	10	6	3	1	21	7	21
Zimbabwe	10	4	3	3	13	14	15
Gabon	10	2	4	4	11	13	10
Algeria	10	1	5	4	8	15	8
Rwanda	10	1	2	7	6	16	5

05.06.04 Algeria-Angola 0-0
05.06.04 Gabon-Zimbabwe 1-1
05.06.04 Nigeria-Rwanda..... 2-0
19.06.04 Rwanda-Gabon 3-1
20.06.04 Angola-Nigeria..... 1-0
20.06.04 Zimbabwe-Algeria 1-1
03.07.04 Gabon-Angola 2-2
03.07.04 Nigeria-Algeria..... 1-0
03.07.04 Rwanda-Zimbabwe..... 0-2
03.09.04 Zimbabwe-Nigeria 0-3
05.09.04 Algeria-Gabon 0-3
05.09.04 Angola-Rwanda 1-0
09.10.04 Gabon-Nigeria..... 1-1
09.10.04 Rwanda-Algeria 1-1
10.10.04 Angola-Zimbabwe..... 1-0
26.03.05 Nigeria-Gabon..... 2-0
27.03.05 Algeria-Rwanda 1-0
27.03.05 Zimbabwe-Angola..... 2-0
05.06.05 Angola-Algeria 2-1
05.06.05 Rwanda-Nigeria..... 1-1
05.06.05 Zimbabwe-Gabon 1-0
18.06.05 Gabon-Rwanda 3-0
18.06.05 Nigeria-Angola..... 1-1
19.06.05 Algeria-Zimbabwe 2-2
04.09.05 Algeria-Nigeria..... 2-5
04.09.05 Angola-Gabon 3-0
04.09.05 Zimbabwe-Rwanda..... 3-1
08.10.05 Gabon-Algeria..... 0-0
08.10.05 Nigeria-Zimbabwe 5-1
08.10.05 Rwanda-Angola 0-1

Group 5

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
TUNISIA	10	6	3	1	25	9	21
Morocco	10	5	5	0	17	7	20
Guinea	10	5	2	3	15	10	17
Kenya	10	3	1	6	8	17	10
Botswana	10	3	0	7	10	18	9
Malawi	10	1	3	6	12	26	6

05.06.04 Malawi-Morocco..... 1-1
05.06.04 Tunisia-Botswana 4-1
19.06.04 Botswana-Malawi..... 2-0
20.06.04 Guinea-Tunisia..... 2-1
03.07.04 Botswana-Morocco..... 0-1
03.07.04 Malawi-Guinea..... 1-1
04.09.04 Kenya-Malawi..... 3-2
04.09.04 Morocco-Tunisia 1-1
05.09.04 Guinea-Botswana 4-0
09.10.04 Botswana-Kenya..... 2-1
09.10.04 Malawi-Tunisia 2-2
10.10.04 Guinea-Morocco 1-1
17.11.04 Kenya-Guinea 2-1
09.02.05 Morocco-Kenya..... 5-1
26.03.05 Kenya-Botswana..... 1-0
26.03.05 Morocco-Guinea 1-0
26.03.05 Tunisia-Malawi 7-0
04.06.05 Botswana-Tunisia 1-3
04.06.05 Morocco-Malawi..... 4-1
05.06.05 Guinea-Kenya 1-0
11.06.05 Tunisia-Guinea..... 2-0
18.06.05 Kenya-Morocco..... 0-0
18.06.05 Malawi-Botswana..... 1-3
17.08.05 Tunisia-Kenya 1-0
03.09.05 Kenya-Tunisia 0-2
03.09.05 Morocco-Botswana..... 1-0
04.09.05 Guinea-Malawi..... 3-1
08.10.05 Botswana-Guinea 1-2
08.10.05 Malawi-Kenya..... 3-0
08.10.05 Tunisia-Morocco 2-2

Group winners qualified for finals

ASIA

4.5 finals berths

2nd stage

Group A

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
SAUDI ARABIA	6	4	2	0	10	1	14
SOUTH KOREA	6	3	1	2	9	5	10
Uzbekistan	6	1	2	3	7	11	5
Kuwait	6	1	1	4	4	13	4

09.02.05 South Korea-Kuwait..... 2-0
09.02.05 Uzbekistan-Saudi Arabia..... 1-1
25.03.05 Kuwait-Uzbekistan..... 2-1
25.03.05 Saudi Arabia-South Korea..... 2-0
30.03.05 Kuwait-Saudi Arabia 0-0
30.03.05 South Korea-Uzbekistan 2-1
03.06.05 Saudi Arabia-Kuwait 3-0
03.06.05 Uzbekistan-South Korea 1-1
08.06.05 Kuwait-South Korea..... 0-4
08.06.05 Saudi Arabia-Uzbekistan..... 3-0
17.08.05 South Korea-Saudi Arabia..... 0-1
17.08.05 Uzbekistan-Kuwait..... 3-2

Group B

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
JAPAN	6	5	0	1	9	4	15
IRAN	6	4	1	1	7	3	13
Bahrain	6	1	1	4	4	7	4
North Korea	6	1	0	5	5	11	3

09.02.05 Bahrain-Iran..... 0-0
09.02.05 Japan-North Korea 2-1
25.03.05 Iran-Japan 2-1
25.03.05 North Korea-Bahrain..... 1-2
30.03.05 Japan-Bahrain 1-0
30.03.05 North Korea-Iran 0-2
03.06.05 Iran-North Korea 1-0
03.06.05 Bahrain-Japan 0-1
08.06.05 Iran-Bahrain..... 1-0
08.06.05 North Korea-Japan 0-2
17.08.05 Bahrain-North Korea..... 2-3
17.08.05 Japan-Iran 2-1

Group winners and runners-up qualified for finals. The two third-placed teams entered the Asian play-off

Asian play-off

08.10.05 Uzbekistan-Bahrain 1-1
12.10.05 Bahrain-Uzbekistan 0-0
Agg 1-1. Bahrain on away goals

Bahrain met Trinidad & Tobago, the fourth-placed CONCACAF team, in the Asia-CONCACAF play-off for a place in finals

CONCACAF

3.5 finals berths

3rd stage

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
UNITED STATES	10	7	1	2	16	6	22
MEXICO	10	7	1	2	22	9	22
COSTA RICA	10	5	1	4	15	14	16
Trinidad & Tob	10	4	1	5	10	15	13
Guatemala	10	3	2	5	16	18	11
Panama	10	0	2	8	4	21	2

09.02.05 Costa Rica-Mexico..... 1-2
09.02.05 Panama-Guatemala..... 0-0
09.02.05 Trinidad & Tob-United States..... 1-2
26.03.05 Costa Rica-Panama 2-1
26.03.05 Guatemala-Trinidad & Tob..... 5-1
27.03.05 Mexico-United States 2-1
30.03.05 Panama-Mexico..... 1-1
30.03.05 Trinidad & Tob-Costa Rica..... 0-0
30.03.05 United States-Guatemala..... 2-0
04.06.05 Guatemala-Mexico..... 0-2
04.06.05 Trinidad & Tob-Panama..... 2-0
04.06.05 United States-Costa Rica..... 3-0
08.06.05 Costa Rica-Guatemala 3-2
08.06.05 Mexico-Trinidad & Tob 2-0
08.06.05 Panama-United States..... 0-3
17.08.05 Guatemala-Panama 2-1
17.08.05 Mexico-Costa Rica..... 2-0
17.08.05 United States-Trinidad & Tob ... 1-0
03.09.05 Panama-Costa Rica 1-3
03.09.05 Trinidad & Tob-Guatemala..... 3-2
03.09.05 United States-Mexico 2-0
07.09.05 Costa Rica-Trinidad & Tob..... 2-0
07.09.05 Guatemala-United States..... 0-0
07.09.05 Mexico-Panama..... 5-0
08.10.05 Costa Rica-United States..... 3-0
08.10.05 Mexico-Guatemala..... 5-2
08.10.05 Panama-Trinidad & Tob..... 0-1
12.10.05 Guatemala-Costa Rica 3-1
12.10.05 Trinidad & Tob-Mexico 2-1
12.10.05 United States-Panama..... 2-0

Top three qualified for finals. Trinidad & Tobago met Bahrain, the winners of the Asian play-off, in the Asia-CONCACAF play-off for a place in finals

EUROPE

14 finals berths (including hosts Germany, who qualify automatically)

Group 1

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
HOLLAND	12	10	2	0	27	3	32
Czech Republic	12	9	0	3	35	12	27
Romania	12	8	1	3	20	10	25
Finland	12	5	1	6	21	19	16
Macedonia	12	2	3	7	11	24	9
Armenia	12	2	1	9	9	25	7
Andorra	12	1	2	9	4	34	5

18.08.04 Macedonia-Armenia 3-0
18.08.04 Romania-Finland 2-1
04.09.04 Finland-Andorra..... 3-0
04.09.04 Romania-Macedonia..... 2-1
08.09.04 Andorra-Romania..... 1-5
08.09.04 Armenia-Finland 0-2
08.09.04 Holland-Czech Republic..... 2-0
09.10.04 Czech Republic-Romania..... 1-0
09.10.04 Finland-Armenia 3-1
09.10.04 Macedonia-Holland..... 2-2
13.10.04 Andorra-Macedonia 1-0
13.10.04 Armenia-Czech Republic 0-3
13.10.04 Holland-Finland 3-1
17.11.04 Andorra-Holland..... 0-3
17.11.04 Armenia-Romania..... 1-1
17.11.04 Macedonia-Czech Republic 0-2
09.02.05 Macedonia-Andorra 0-0
26.03.05 Armenia-Andorra 2-1
26.03.05 Czech Republic-Finland 4-3
26.03.05 Romania-Holland 0-2
30.03.05 Andorra-Czech Republic 0-4
30.03.05 Holland-Armenia..... 2-0
30.03.05 Macedonia-Romania..... 1-2

YYePG Proudly Presents, Thx for Support

04.06.05 Armenia-Macedonia ... 1-2
04.06.05 Czech Republic-Andorra ... 8-1
04.06.05 Holland-Romania ... 2-0
08.06.05 Czech Republic-Macedonia ... 6-1
08.06.05 Finland-Holland ... 0-4
08.06.05 Romania-Armenia ... 3-0
17.08.05 Macedonia-Finland ... 0-3
17.08.05 Romania-Andorra ... 2-0
03.09.05 Andorra-Finland ... 0-0
03.09.05 Armenia-Holland ... 0-1
03.09.05 Romania-Czech Republic ... 2-0
07.09.05 Czech Republic-Armenia ... 4-1
07.09.05 Finland-Macedonia ... 5-1
07.09.05 Holland-Andorra ... 4-0
08.10.05 Czech Republic-Holland ... 0-2
08.10.05 Finland-Romania ... 0-1
12.10.05 Andorra-Armenia ... 0-3
12.10.05 Finland-Czech Republic ... 0-3
12.10.05 Holland-Macedonia ... 0-0

Group 2

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
UKRAINE	12	7	4	1	18	7	25
Turkey	12	6	5	1	23	9	23
Denmark	12	6	4	2	24	12	22
Greece	12	6	3	3	15	9	21
Albania	12	4	1	7	11	20	13
Georgia	12	2	4	6	14	25	10
Kazakhstan	12	0	1	11	6	29	1

04.09.04 Albania-Greece ... 2-1
04.09.04 Denmark-Ukraine ... 1-1
04.09.04 Turkey-Georgia ... 1-1
08.09.04 Georgia-Albania ... 2-0
08.09.04 Greece-Turkey ... 0-0
08.09.04 Kazakhstan-Ukraine ... 1-2
09.10.04 Albania-Denmark ... 0-2
09.10.04 Turkey-Kazakhstan ... 4-0
09.10.04 Ukraine-Greece ... 1-1
13.10.04 Denmark-Turkey ... 1-1
13.10.04 Kazakhstan-Albania ... 0-1
13.10.04 Ukraine-Georgia ... 2-0
17.11.04 Georgia-Denmark ... 2-2
17.11.04 Greece-Kazakhstan ... 3-1
17.11.04 Turkey-Ukraine ... 0-3
09.02.05 Albania-Ukraine ... 0-2
09.02.05 Greece-Denmark ... 2-1
26.03.05 Denmark-Kazakhstan ... 3-0
26.03.05 Georgia-Greece ... 1-3
26.03.05 Turkey-Albania ... 2-0
30.03.05 Georgia-Turkey ... 2-5
30.03.05 Greece-Albania ... 2-0
30.03.05 Ukraine-Denmark ... 1-0
04.06.05 Albania-Georgia ... 3-2
04.06.05 Turkey-Greece ... 0-0
04.06.05 Ukraine-Kazakhstan ... 2-0
08.06.05 Denmark-Albania ... 3-1
08.06.05 Greece-Ukraine ... 0-1
08.06.05 Kazakhstan-Turkey ... 0-6
17.08.05 Kazakhstan-Georgia ... 1-2
03.09.05 Albania-Kazakhstan ... 2-1
03.09.05 Georgia-Ukraine ... 1-1
03.09.05 Turkey-Denmark ... 2-2
07.09.05 Denmark-Georgia ... 6-1
07.09.05 Kazakhstan-Greece ... 1-2
07.09.05 Ukraine-Turkey ... 0-1
08.10.05 Denmark-Greece ... 1-0
08.10.05 Georgia-Kazakhstan ... 0-0
08.10.05 Ukraine-Albania ... 2-2
12.10.05 Albania-Turkey ... 0-1
12.10.05 Greece-Georgia ... 1-0
12.10.05 Kazakhstan-Denmark ... 1-2

Group 3

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
PORTUGAL	12	9	3	0	35	5	30
Slovakia	12	6	5	1	24	8	23
Russia	12	6	5	1	23	12	23
Estonia	12	5	2	5	16	17	17
Latvia	12	4	3	5	18	21	15
Liechtenstein	12	2	2	8	13	23	8
Luxembourg	12	0	0	12	5	48	0

18.08.04 Liechtenstein-Estonia ... 1-2
18.08.04 Slovakia-Luxembourg ... 3-1
04.09.04 Estonia-Luxembourg ... 4-0
04.09.04 Latvia-Portugal ... 0-2
04.09.04 Russia-Slovakia ... 1-1
08.09.04 Luxembourg-Latvia ... 3-4
08.09.04 Portugal-Estonia ... 4-0
08.09.04 Slovakia-Liechtenstein ... 7-0
09.10.04 Liechtenstein-Portugal ... 2-2
09.10.04 Luxembourg-Russia ... 0-4
09.10.04 Slovakia-Latvia ... 4-1
13.10.04 Latvia-Estonia ... 2-2
13.10.04 Luxembourg-Liechtenstein ... 0-4
13.10.04 Portugal-Russia ... 7-1
17.11.04 Liechtenstein-Latvia ... 1-3
17.11.04 Luxembourg-Portugal ... 0-5
17.11.04 Russia-Estonia ... 4-0
26.03.05 Estonia-Slovakia ... 1-2
26.03.05 Liechtenstein-Russia ... 1-2
30.03.05 Estonia-Russia ... 1-1
30.03.05 Latvia-Luxembourg ... 4-0
30.03.05 Slovakia-Portugal ... 1-1
04.06.05 Estonia-Liechtenstein ... 2-0
04.06.05 Portugal-Slovakia ... 2-0
04.06.05 Russia-Latvia ... 2-0
08.06.05 Estonia-Portugal ... 0-1
08.06.05 Latvia-Liechtenstein ... 1-0
08.06.05 Luxembourg-Slovakia ... 0-4
17.08.05 Latvia-Russia ... 1-1
17.08.05 Liechtenstein-Slovakia ... 0-0
03.09.05 Estonia-Latvia ... 2-1
03.09.05 Portugal-Luxembourg ... 6-0
03.09.05 Russia-Liechtenstein ... 2-0
07.09.05 Latvia-Slovakia ... 1-1
07.09.05 Liechtenstein-Luxembourg ... 3-0
07.09.05 Russia-Portugal ... 0-0
08.10.05 Portugal-Liechtenstein ... 2-1
08.10.05 Russia-Luxembourg ... 5-1
08.10.05 Slovakia-Estonia ... 1-0
12.10.05 Luxembourg-Estonia ... 0-2
12.10.05 Portugal-Latvia ... 3-0
12.10.05 Slovakia-Russia ... 0-0

Group 4

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
FRANCE	10	5	5	0	14	2	20
Switzerland	10	4	6	0	18	7	18
Israel	10	4	6	0	15	10	18
Rep Ireland	10	4	5	1	12	5	17
Cyprus	10	1	1	8	8	20	4
Faroe Islands	10	0	1	9	4	27	1

04.09.04 France-Israel ... 0-0
04.09.04 Rep Ireland-Cyprus ... 3-0
04.09.04 Switzerland-Faroe Islands ... 6-0
08.09.04 Faroe Islands-France ... 0-2
08.09.04 Israel-Cyprus ... 2-1
08.09.04 Switzerland-Rep Ireland ... 1-1
09.10.04 Cyprus-Faroe Islands ... 2-2
09.10.04 France-Rep Ireland ... 0-0
09.10.04 Israel-Switzerland ... 2-2
13.10.04 Cyprus-France ... 0-2
13.10.04 Rep Ireland-Faroe Islands ... 2-0
17.11.04 Cyprus-Israel ... 1-2
26.03.05 France-Switzerland ... 0-0
26.03.05 Israel-Rep Ireland ... 1-1
30.03.05 Israel-France ... 1-1
30.03.05 Switzerland-Cyprus ... 1-0
04.06.05 Faroe Islands-Switzerland ... 1-3
04.06.05 Rep Ireland-Israel ... 2-2
08.06.05 Faroe Islands-Rep Ireland ... 0-2
17.08.05 Faroe Islands-Cyprus ... 0-3
03.09.05 France-Faroe Islands ... 3-0
03.09.05 Switzerland-Israel ... 1-1
07.09.05 Cyprus-Switzerland ... 1-3
07.09.05 Faroe Islands-Israel ... 0-2
07.09.05 Rep Ireland-France ... 0-1
08.10.05 Cyprus-Rep Ireland ... 0-1
08.10.05 Israel-Faroe Islands ... 2-1
08.10.05 Switzerland-France ... 1-1
12.10.05 France-Cyprus ... 4-0
12.10.05 Rep Ireland-Switzerland ... 0-0

Group 5

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
ITALY	10	7	2	1	17	8	23
Norway	10	5	3	2	12	7	18
Scotland	10	3	4	3	9	7	13
Slovenia	10	3	3	4	10	13	12
Belarus	10	2	4	4	12	14	10
Moldova	10	1	2	7	5	16	5

04.09.04 Italy-Norway ... 2-1
04.09.04 Slovenia-Moldova ... 3-0
08.09.04 Moldova-Italy ... 0-1
08.09.04 Norway-Belarus ... 1-1
08.09.04 Scotland-Slovenia ... 0-0
09.10.04 Belarus-Moldova ... 4-0
09.10.04 Scotland-Norway ... 0-1
09.10.04 Slovenia-Italy ... 1-0
13.10.04 Italy-Belarus ... 4-3
13.10.04 Moldova-Scotland ... 1-1
13.10.04 Norway-Slovenia ... 3-0
26.03.05 Italy-Scotland ... 2-0
30.03.05 Moldova-Norway ... 0-0
30.03.05 Slovenia-Belarus ... 1-1
04.06.05 Belarus-Slovenia ... 1-1
04.06.05 Norway-Italy ... 0-0
04.06.05 Scotland-Moldova ... 2-0
08.06.05 Belarus-Scotland ... 0-0
03.09.05 Moldova-Belarus ... 2-0
03.09.05 Scotland-Italy ... 1-1
03.09.05 Slovenia-Norway ... 2-3
07.09.05 Belarus-Italy ... 1-4
07.09.05 Moldova-Slovenia ... 1-2
07.09.05 Norway-Scotland ... 1-2
08.10.05 Italy-Slovenia ... 1-0
08.10.05 Norway-Moldova ... 1-0
08.10.05 Scotland-Belarus ... 0-1
12.10.05 Belarus-Norway ... 0-1
12.10.05 Italy-Moldova ... 2-1
12.10.05 Slovenia-Scotland ... 0-3

Group 6

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
ENGLAND	10	8	1	1	17	5	25
POLAND	10	8	0	2	27	9	24
Austria	10	4	3	3	15	12	15
N Ireland	10	2	3	5	10	18	9
Wales	10	2	2	6	10	15	8
Azerbaijan	10	0	3	7	1	21	3

04.09.04 Austria-England ... 2-2
04.09.04 Azerbaijan-Wales ... 1-1
04.09.04 Northern Ireland-Poland ... 0-3
08.09.04 Austria-Azerbaijan ... 2-0
08.09.04 Poland-England ... 1-2
08.09.04 Wales-Northern Ireland ... 2-2
09.10.04 Austria-Poland ... 1-3
09.10.04 Azerbaijan-Northern Ireland ... 0-0
09.10.04 England-Wales ... 2-0
13.10.04 Azerbaijan-England ... 0-1
13.10.04 Northern Ireland-Austria ... 3-3
13.10.04 Wales-Poland ... 2-3
26.03.05 England-Northern Ireland ... 4-0
26.03.05 Poland-Azerbaijan ... 8-0
26.03.05 Wales-Austria ... 0-2
30.03.05 Austria-Wales ... 1-0
30.03.05 England-Azerbaijan ... 2-0
30.03.05 Poland-Northern Ireland ... 1-0
04.06.05 Azerbaijan-Poland ... 0-3
03.09.05 Northern Ireland-Azerbaijan ... 2-0
03.09.05 Poland-Austria ... 3-2
03.09.05 Wales-England ... 0-1
07.09.05 Azerbaijan-Austria ... 0-0
07.09.05 Northern Ireland-England ... 1-0
07.09.05 Poland-Wales ... 1-0
08.10.05 England-Austria ... 1-0
08.10.05 Northern Ireland-Wales ... 2-3
12.10.05 Austria-Northern Ireland ... 2-0
12.10.05 England-Poland ... 2-1
12.10.05 Wales-Azerbaijan ... 2-0

Group 7

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
SERBIA & M	10	6	4	0	16	1	22
Spain	10	5	5	0	19	3	20
Bosnia-Herz	10	4	4	2	12	9	16
Belgium	10	3	3	4	16	11	12
Lithuania	10	2	4	4	8	9	10
San Marino	10	0	0	10	2	40	0

04.09.04 Belgium-Lithuania ... 1-1
04.09.04 San Marino-Serbia & M'negro ... 0-3
08.09.04 Bosnia-Herz-Spain ... 1-1
08.09.04 Lithuania-San Marino ... 4-0
09.10.04 Bosnia-Herz-Serbia & M'negro ... 0-0
09.10.04 Spain-Belgium ... 2-0
13.10.04 Lithuania-Spain ... 0-0
13.10.04 Serbia & M'negro-San Marino ... 5-0
17.11.04 Belgium-Serbia & M'negro ... 0-2
17.11.04 San Marino-Lithuania ... 0-1
09.02.05 Spain-San Marino ... 5-0
26.03.05 Belgium-Bosnia-Herz ... 4-1
30.03.05 Bosnia-Herz-Lithuania ... 1-1
30.03.05 San Marino-Belgium ... 1-2
30.03.05 Serbia & M'negro-Spain ... 0-0
04.06.05 San Marino-Bosnia-Herz ... 1-3
04.06.05 Serbia & M'negro-Belgium ... 0-0
04.06.05 Spain-Lithuania ... 1-0
08.06.05 Spain-Bosnia-Herz ... 1-1
03.09.05 Bosnia-Herz-Belgium ... 1-0
03.09.05 Serbia & M'negro-Lithuania ... 2-0
07.09.05 Belgium-San Marino ... 8-0
07.09.05 Lithuania-Bosnia-Herz ... 0-1
07.09.05 Spain-Serbia & M'negro ... 1-1
08.10.05 Belgium-Spain ... 0-2
08.10.05 Bosnia-Herz-San Marino ... 3-0
08.10.05 Lithuania-Serbia & M'negro ... 0-2
12.10.05 Lithuania-Belgium ... 1-1
12.10.05 San Marino-Spain ... 0-6
12.10.05 Serbia & M'negro-Bosnia-Herz ... 1-0

Group 8

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
CROATIA	10	7	3	0	21	5	24
SWEDEN	10	8	0	2	30	4	24
Bulgaria	10	4	3	3	17	17	15
Hungary	10	4	2	4	13	14	14
Iceland	10	1	1	8	14	27	4
Malta	10	0	3	7	4	32	3

04.09.04 Croatia-Hungary ... 3-0
04.09.04 Iceland-Bulgaria ... 1-3
04.09.04 Malta-Sweden ... 0-7
08.09.04 Hungary-Iceland ... 3-2
08.09.04 Sweden-Croatia ... 0-1
09.10.04 Croatia-Bulgaria ... 2-2
09.10.04 Malta-Iceland ... 0-0
09.10.04 Sweden-Hungary ... 3-0
13.10.04 Bulgaria-Malta ... 4-1
13.10.04 Iceland-Sweden ... 1-4
17.11.04 Malta-Hungary ... 0-2
26.03.05 Bulgaria-Sweden ... 0-3
26.03.05 Croatia-Iceland ... 4-0
30.03.05 Croatia-Malta ... 3-0
30.03.05 Hungary-Bulgaria ... 1-1
04.06.05 Bulgaria-Croatia ... 1-3
04.06.05 Iceland-Hungary ... 2-3
04.06.05 Sweden-Malta ... 6-0
08.06.05 Iceland-Malta ... 4-1
03.09.05 Hungary-Malta ... 4-0
03.09.05 Iceland-Croatia ... 1-3
03.09.05 Sweden-Bulgaria ... 3-0
07.09.05 Bulgaria-Iceland ... 3-2
07.09.05 Hungary-Sweden ... 0-1
07.09.05 Malta-Croatia ... 1-1
08.10.05 Bulgaria-Hungary ... 2-0
08.10.05 Croatia-Sweden ... 1-0
12.10.05 Hungary-Croatia ... 0-0
12.10.05 Malta-Bulgaria ... 1-1
12.10.05 Sweden-Iceland ... 3-1

Group winners and the two best runners-up qualified for finals. The other six runners-up were paired in three play-off matches for a place in finals

OCEANIA

0.5 finals berths

3rd stage

03.09.05 Australia-Solomon Islands ... 7-0
06.09.05 Solomon Islands-Australia ... 1-2
Australia 9-1 on agg

Australia met Uruguay, the fifth-placed South American team, in the Oceania-South America play-off for a place in finals

SOUTH AMERICA

4.5 finals berths

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
BRAZIL	18	9	7	2	35	17	34
ARGENTINA	18	10	4	4	29	17	34
ECUADOR	18	8	4	6	23	19	28
PARAGUAY	18	8	4	6	23	23	28
Uruguay	18	6	7	5	23	28	25
Colombia	18	6	6	6	24	16	24
Chile	18	5	7	6	18	22	22
Venezuela	18	5	3	10	20	28	18
Peru	18	4	6	8	20	28	18
Bolivia	18	4	2	12	20	37	14

06.09.03 Argentina-Chile ... 2-2
06.09.03 Ecuador-Venezuela ... 2-0
06.09.03 Peru-Paraguay ... 4-1
07.09.03 Colombia-Brazil ... 1-2
07.09.03 Uruguay-Bolivia ... 5-0
09.09.03 Chile-Peru ... 2-1
09.09.03 Venezuela-Argentina ... 0-3
10.09.03 Bolivia-Colombia ... 4-0
10.09.03 Brazil-Ecuador ... 1-0
10.09.03 Paraguay-Uruguay ... 4-1
15.11.03 Argentina-Bolivia ... 3-0
15.11.03 Colombia-Venezuela ... 0-1
15.11.03 Paraguay-Ecuador ... 2-1
15.11.03 Uruguay-Chile ... 2-1
16.11.03 Peru-Brazil ... 1-1
18.11.03 Chile-Paraguay ... 0-1
18.11.03 Venezuela-Bolivia ... 2-1
19.11.03 Brazil-Uruguay ... 3-3
19.11.03 Colombia-Argentina ... 1-1
19.11.03 Ecuador-Peru ... 0-0
30.03.04 Argentina-Ecuador ... 1-0
30.03.04 Bolivia-Chile ... 0-2

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31.03.04	Paraguay-Brazil	0-0
31.03.04	Peru-Colombia	0-2
31.03.04	Uruguay-Venezuela	0-3
01.06.04	Bolivia-Paraguay	2-1
01.06.04	Uruguay-Peru	1-3
01.06.04	Venezuela-Chile	0-1
02.06.04	Brazil-Argentina	3-1
02.06.04	Ecuador-Colombia	2-1
05.06.04	Ecuador-Bolivia	3-2
06.06.04	Argentina-Paraguay	0-0
06.06.04	Chile-Brazil	1-1
06.06.04	Colombia-Uruguay	5-0
06.06.04	Peru-Venezuela	0-0
04.09.04	Peru-Argentina	1-3
05.09.04	Brazil-Bolivia	3-1
05.09.04	Chile-Colombia	0-0
05.09.04	Paraguay-Venezuela	1-0
05.09.04	Uruguay-Ecuador	1-0
09.10.04	Argentina-Uruguay	4-2
09.10.04	Bolivia-Peru	1-0
09.10.04	Colombia-Paraguay	1-1
09.10.04	Venezuela-Brazil	2-5
10.10.04	Ecuador-Chile	2-0
12.10.04	Bolivia-Uruguay	0-0
13.10.04	Brazil-Colombia	0-0
13.10.04	Chile-Argentina	0-0
13.10.04	Paraguay-Peru	1-1
14.10.04	Venezuela-Ecuador	3-1
17.11.04	Argentina-Venezuela	3-2
17.11.04	Colombia-Bolivia	1-0
17.11.04	Ecuador-Brazil	1-0
17.11.04	Peru-Chile	2-1
17.11.04	Uruguay-Paraguay	1-0
26.03.05	Bolivia-Argentina	1-2
26.03.05	Chile-Uruguay	1-1
26.03.05	Venezuela-Colombia	0-0
27.03.05	Brazil-Peru	1-0
27.03.05	Ecuador-Paraguay	5-2
29.03.05	Bolivia-Venezuela	3-1
30.03.05	Argentina-Colombia	1-0
30.03.05	Paraguay-Chile	2-1
30.03.05	Peru-Ecuador	2-2
30.03.05	Uruguay-Brazil	1-1
04.06.05	Chile-Bolivia	3-1
04.06.05	Colombia-Peru	5-0
04.06.05	Ecuador-Argentina	2-0
04.06.05	Venezuela-Uruguay	1-1
05.06.05	Brazil-Paraguay	4-1
07.06.05	Peru-Uruguay	0-0
08.06.05	Argentina-Brazil	3-1
08.06.05	Chile-Venezuela	2-1
08.06.05	Colombia-Ecuador	3-0
08.06.05	Paraguay-Bolivia	4-1
03.09.05	Bolivia-Ecuador	1-2
03.09.05	Paraguay-Argentina	1-0
03.09.05	Venezuela-Peru	4-1
04.09.05	Brazil-Chile	5-0
04.09.05	Uruguay-Colombia	3-2
08.10.05	Colombia-Chile	1-1
08.10.05	Ecuador-Uruguay	0-0
08.10.05	Venezuela-Paraguay	0-1
09.10.05	Argentina-Peru	2-0
09.10.05	Bolivia-Brazil	1-1
12.10.05	Brazil-Venezuela	3-0
12.10.05	Chile-Ecuador	0-0
12.10.05	Paraguay-Colombia	0-1
12.10.05	Peru-Bolivia	4-1
12.10.05	Uruguay-Argentina	1-0

Top four qualified for finals. Uruguay met Australia, the Oceania section winners, in the Oceania-South America play-off for a place in finals

INTERNATIONALS

Thursday, November 24
Nov 24 - Khartoum - friendly
Sudan 1
Ethiopia 5 (Teffera, Tesfaye, Shegire, Demeke, Feleke)
HT: 0-2

Saturday, November 26
Nov 26 - Kuwait City - friendly
Kuwait 0
Iraq 0

Friday, December 2
Dec 2 - Sharjah - friendly
United Arab Emirates 1 (Jumaa 60)
Libya 1 (Dawood 39)
HT: 0-1

CECAFA CUP

In Kigali, Rwanda

Group A
Nov 26: Rwanda 0 Zanzibar 1.
Nov 28: Zanzibar 3 Eritrea 0; Tanzania 2 Burundi 1.
Nov 30: Burundi 1 Zanzibar 2; Eritrea 2 Rwanda 3.
Dec 2: Tanzania 1 Zanzibar 1; Burundi 0 Eritrea 0.
Dec 4: Tanzania 1 Eritrea 0; Rwanda 2 Burundi 0.
Dec 6: Tanzania 1 Rwanda 3.

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Zanzibar	4	3	1	0	7	2	10
Rwanda	4	3	0	1	8	4	9
Tanzania	4	2	1	1	5	5	7
Burundi	4	0	1	3	2	6	1
Eritrea	4	0	1	3	2	7	1

Group B
Nov 27: Djibouti 1 Somalia 2; Uganda 0 Ethiopia 0.
Nov 29: Sudan 4 Somalia 1.
Nov 30: Uganda 6 Djibouti 1.
Dec 1: Ethiopia 3 Sudan 1; Uganda 7 Somalia 0.
Dec 3: Djibouti 0 Ethiopia 6; Uganda 3 Sudan 0.
Dec 5: Ethiopia 3 Somalia 1; Sudan 4 Djibouti 0.

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Uganda	4	3	1	0	16	1	10
Ethiopia	4	3	1	0	12	2	10
Sudan	4	2	0	2	9	7	6
Somalia	4	1	0	3	4	15	3
Djibouti	4	0	0	4	2	18	0

Semi-finals
Dec 8
Zanzibar 0
Ethiopia 4 (Girma 14, Teffera 46, 48, 82)
HT: 0-1

Dec 8
Uganda 0
Rwanda 1 (Karekezi 100)
Aet. **HT:** 0-0. **90mins:** 0-0

Third-place play-off
Dec 10
Zanzibar 0
Uganda 0
Zanzibar 5-4 on pens

Final
Dec 10
Ethiopia 1 (Negussie 60)
Rwanda 0
HT: 0-0
Sent off: Negussie (Ethiopia)

2006 AFRICAN NATIONS CUP

In Egypt

Match schedule

Group A
In Cairo
Jan 20 Egypt v Libya
Jan 21 Morocco v Ivory Coast
Jan 24 Libya v Ivory Coast
Jan 24 Egypt v Morocco
Jan 28 Egypt v Ivory Coast
Jan 28 Libya v Morocco

Group B
In Cairo
Jan 21 Cameroon v Angola
Jan 21 Togo v DR Congo
Jan 25 Angola v DR Congo
Jan 25 Cameroon v Togo
Jan 29 Angola v Togo
Jan 29 Cameroon v DR Congo

Group C
In Alexandria
Jan 22 Tunisia v Zambia
Jan 22 South Africa v Guinea
Jan 26 Zambia v Guinea
Jan 26 Tunisia v South Africa
Jan 30 Tunisia v Guinea
Jan 30 Zambia v South Africa

Group D
In Port Said & Ismailia
Jan 23 Nigeria v Ghana
Jan 23 Zimbabwe v Senegal
Jan 27 Ghana v Senegal
Jan 27 Nigeria v Zimbabwe
Jan 31 Nigeria v Senegal
Jan 31 Ghana v Zimbabwe

Quarter-finals
Feb 3 Gp A 1st v Gp B 2nd (QF1) Cairo
Feb 3 Gp C 1st v Gp D 2nd (QF2) Alexandria
Feb 4 Gp B 1st v Gp A 2nd (QF3) Cairo
Feb 4 Gp D 1st v Gp C 2nd (QF4) Port Said

Semi-finals
Feb 7 QF1 winners v QF2 winners Cairo
Feb 7 QF3 winners v QF4 winners Alexandria

Third-place play-off
Feb 9 Cairo

Final
Feb 10 Cairo

EUROPE

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

Group A
Nov 22
Bayern Munich (Ger) 4 (Deisler 21, Karimi 54, Makaay 72, 76)
Rapid Wien (Aut) 0
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 66,000. **Ref:** Dauden Ibanez (Spa)
Bayern: Kahn - Sagnol, Lucio, Ismael, Lizarazu (Lahm 63), Demichelis, Deisler, Karimi (Guerrero 82), Ze Roberto (Schweinsteiger 46), Pizarro, Makaay.
Rapid: Payer - Korsos, Martin Hiden, Bejbl, Katzer, Hofmann, Valachovic (Martinez 68), Hlinka (Garics 80), Ivanschitz (Dollinger 84), Kincl, Akagunduz.

Nov 22
Juventus (Ita) 1 (Del Piero 80)
Club Brugge (Blg) 0
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 9,623. **Ref:** Styles (Eng)
Juventus: Abbiati - Zambrotta, Thuram, Cannavaro, Chiellini, Camoranesi (Mutu 81), Emerson, Vieira, Nedved, Del Piero, Trezeguet (Zalayeta 84).
Club Brugge: Butina - Maertens, Spilar, Clement (Englebert 50), Vanaudenaerde, Verheyen, Vermant, Leko, Gvozdenovic (Lange 84), Dufer (Serebrennikov 81), Portillo.

Dec 7
Rapid Wien 1 (Kincl 52)
Juventus 3 (Del Piero 35, 45, Ibrahimovic 41)
HT: 0-3. **Att:** 47,000. **Ref:** Jara (Cze)
Rapid: Payer - Dober, Martin Hiden, Valachovic, Katzer, Korsos (Martinez 81), Hlinka, Hofmann, Ivanschitz, Kincl, Akagunduz (Kienast 86).
Juventus: Abbiati - Balzaretti, Kovac, Thuram, Chiellini, Camoranesi (Giannichedda 78), Blasi, Vieira, Mutu (Pessotto 61), Del Piero, Ibrahimovic (Zalayeta 46).

Dec 7
Club Brugge 1 (Portillo 32)
Bayern Munich 1 (Pizarro 21)
HT: 1-1. **Att:** 28,000. **Ref:** Duhamel (Fra)
Club Brugge: Butina - Clement, Maertens, Spilar, Vandelannoite, Vermant, Englebert (Vanaudenaerde 90), Roelandts, Yulu-Matondo (Dufer 88), Lange (Gvozdenovic 77), Portillo.
Bayern: Kahn - Lahm, Ismael, Demichelis, Lizarazu, Deisler, Hargreaves (Schweinsteiger 67), Ballack, Karimi (Ze Roberto 46), Makaay (Guerrero 46), Pizarro.

GROUP A – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Juventus	6	5	0	1	12	5	15
Bayern Munich	6	4	1	1	10	4	13
Club Brugge	6	2	1	3	6	7	7
Rapid Wien	6	0	0	6	3	15	0

Sep 14 Club Brugge-Juventus 1-2
Sep 14 Rapid Wien-Bayern Munich 0-1
Sep 27 Juventus-Rapid Wien 3-0
Sep 27 Bayern Munich-Club Brugge 1-0
Oct 18 Bayern Munich-Juventus 2-1
Oct 18 Rapid Wien-Club Brugge 0-1
Nov 2 Juventus-Bayern Munich 2-1
Nov 2 Club Brugge-Rapid Wien 3-2
Nov 22 Bayern Munich-Rapid Wien 4-0
Nov 22 Juventus-Club Brugge 1-0
Dec 7 Rapid Wien-Juventus 1-3
Dec 7 Club Brugge-Bayern Munich 1-1

Group B
Nov 22
Ajax (Hol) 2 (De Jong 68, 89)
Sparta Prague (Cze) 1 (Petras 90)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 50,000. **Ref:** Ivanov (Rus)
Ajax: Stekelenburg - Trabelsi, Grygera, Vermaelen, Emanuelson, Maduro, Sneijder, Lindenbergh (De Jong 53), Pienaar, Anastasiou (Rosenberg 62), Boukhari.
Sparta: Blazek - Petras, Lukas, Petrous, Kadlec, Herzan (Simak 85), Hasek, Pospech, Zelenka (Slepicka 69), Polacek, Dosek.

Nov 22
Thun (Swi) 0
Arsenal (Eng) 1 (Pires pen 88)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 32,000. **Ref:** Cortez Batista (Por)
Thun: Jakupovic - Orman, Hodzic, Deumi, Goncalves (Bernardi 90), Ferreira, Milicevic, Aegerter, Leandro, Adriano Pimenta, Lustrinelli (Sen 84). *Sent off: Deumi 35min.*
Arsenal: Almunia - Eboue, Senderos, Campbell, Cygan (Lauren 67), Ljungberg, Song (Fabregas 56), Flamini, Reyes, Van Persie, Henry (Pires 70).

Dec 7
Sparta Prague 0
Thun 0
Att: 9,233. **Ref:** Riley (Eng)
Sparta: Blazek - Pospech, Petras, Petrous, Kadlec, Simak (Jeslinek 60), Zelenka, Hasek (Herzan 82), Polacek, Dosek, Slepicka (Matusovic 66). *Sent off: Petras 78min.*
Thun: Jakupovic - Orman, Hodzic, Goncalves, Duruz, Adriano Spadoto (Sen 57), Aegerter, Bernardi (Savic 70), Leandro, Adriano Pimenta (Gelson 83), Lustrinelli. *Sent off: Goncalves 85min.*

Dec 7
Arsenal 0
Ajax 0
Att: 35,376. **Ref:** Iturralde Gonzalez (Spa)
Arsenal: Almunia - Eboue, Toure, Senderos, Lauren (Gilbert 73), Owusu-Abeyie, Flamini, Larsson, Hleb (Fabregas 62), Reyes (Van Persie 65), Henry.
Ajax: Stekelenburg - Heitinga, Grygera (Trabelsi 15), Vermaelen, Juanfran, Maduro (De Jong 29), Sneijder, Galasek, Pienaar, Rosenberg, Boukhari (Babel 80).

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GROUP B – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Arsenal	6	5	1	0	10	2	16
Ajax	6	3	2	1	10	6	11
Thun	6	1	1	4	4	9	4
Sparta Prague	6	0	2	4	2	9	2

Sep 14 Arsenal-Thun 2-1
Sep 14 Sparta Prague-Ajax 1-1
Sep 27 Thun-Sparta Prague 1-0
Sep 27 Ajax-Arsenal 1-2
Oct 18 Ajax-Thun 2-0
Oct 18 Sparta Prague-Arsenal 0-2
Nov 2 Thun-Ajax 2-4
Nov 2 Arsenal-Sparta Prague 3-0
Nov 22 Ajax-Sparta Prague 2-1
Nov 22 Thun-Arsenal 0-1
Dec 7 Sparta Prague-Thun 0-0
Dec 7 Arsenal-Ajax 0-0

Group C

Nov 22
Panathinaikos (Gre) 1 (Charalambides 45)
Udinese (Ita) 2 (Iaquinta 80, Candela 84)
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 30,000. **Ref:** Poll (Eng)
Panathinaikos: Galinovic - Morris, Kotsios, Goumas, Darlas, Charalambides, Flavio Conceicao, Gonzalez, Leontiou (Torghelle 83), Mantzios, Papadopoulos (Andric 64).
Udinese: De Sanctis - Bertotto, Sensini, Felipe, Zenoni, Obodo, Muntari (Mauri 75), Candela, Di Natale (Barreto 62), Di Michele (Rossini 80), Iaquinta.

Nov 22
Barcelona (Spa) 3 (Gabri 14, Ronaldinho 26, Larsson 71)
Werder Bremen (Ger) 1 (Borowski pen 22)
HT: 2-1. **Att:** 45,000. **Ref:** Larsen (Den)
Barcelona: Valdes - Oleguer, Puyol, Marquez (Belletti 74), Van Bronckhorst, Gabri (Iniesta 77), Motta, Deco, Giuly (Ezquerro 65), Larsson, Ronaldinho.
Werder: Reinke - Owomoyela, Fahrenhorst, Naldo, Schulz, Baumann, Frings, Borowski, Micoud, Haedo Valdez, Klose (Hunt 59).

Dec 7
Udinese 0
Barcelona 2 (Ezquerro 85, Iniesta 90)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 33,570. **Ref:** Braamhaar (Hol)
Udinese: De Sanctis - Bertotto, Sensini, Juarez, Zenoni (Tissone 38), Vidigal, Obodo, Muntari (Mauri 64), Candela, Di Natale, Iaquinta (Di Michele 75).
Barcelona: Jorquera - Belletti, Puyol, Oleguer, Van Bronckhorst, Gabri (Iniesta 75), Edmilson, Deco, Giuly, Larsson, Ezquerro.

Dec 7
Werder Bremen 5 (Micoud pen 2, Haedo Valdez 28, 31, Klose 51, Frings 90)
Panathinaikos 1 (Morris 53)
HT: 3-0. **Att:** 37,500. **Ref:** Frojdfeldt (Swe)
Werder: Reinke - Owomoyela, Fahrenhorst, Andreasen, Schulz (Pasanen 50), Vranjes, Baumann (D Jensen 75), Micoud, Frings, Klose, Haedo Valdez (Hunt 79).
Panathinaikos: Galinovic - Vintra, Biscan, Morris, Darlas (Wooter 72), Nilsson (Kotsios 79), Flavio Conceicao, Tziolis, Papadopoulos, Gonzalez, Torghelle (Mantzios 73).

GROUP C – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Barcelona	6	5	1	0	16	2	16
Werder Bremen	6	2	1	3	12	12	7
Udinese	6	2	1	3	10	12	7
Panathinaikos	6	1	1	4	4	16	4

Sep 14 Udinese-Panathinaikos 3-0
Sep 14 Werder Bremen-Barcelona 0-2
Sep 27 Barcelona-Udinese 4-1
Sep 27 Panathinaikos-Werder 2-1
Oct 18 Panathinaikos-Barcelona 0-0
Oct 18 Udinese-Werder Bremen 1-1
Nov 2 Barcelona-Panathinaikos 5-0
Nov 2 Werder Bremen-Udinese 4-3
Nov 22 Panathinaikos-Udinese 1-2
Nov 22 Barcelona-Werder Bremen 3-1
Dec 7 Udinese-Barcelona 0-2
Dec 7 Werder-Panathinaikos 5-1

Group D

Nov 22
Manchester United (Eng) 0
Villarreal (Spa) 0
Att: 67,471. **Ref:** De Santis (Ita)
Man Utd: Van der Sar - Brown (Neville 73), Ferdinand, Silvestre, O'Shea, Fletcher (Park 53), Smith (Saha 82), Scholes, Cristiano Ronaldo, Rooney, Van Nistelrooy.
Villarreal: Barbosa - Javi Venta, Rodriguez, Pena, Arruabarrena, Roger (Hector Font 66), Tacchinardi (Josico 79), Marcos Senna, Sorin, Figueroa (Xisco 86), Jose Mari.

Nov 22
Lille (Fra) 0
Benfica (Por) 0
Att: 76,184. **Ref:** Busacca (Swi)
Lille: Sylva - Lichtsteiner, Tavlaridis, Schmitz, Tafforeau, Chalme (Mirallas 69), Bodmer, Makoun, Dernis, Acimovic (Fauvergue 87), Moussilou (Abouchеrouane 75).
Benfica: Quim - Alcides, Luisao, Anderson, Ricardo Rocha, Nelson, Beto, Petit, Leo, Nuno Gomes, Miccoli (Mantorras 44).

Dec 7
Villarreal 1 (Guayre 67)
Lille 0
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 18,000. **Ref:** Ivanov (Rus)
Villarreal: Viera - Kromkamp, Rodriguez, Pena, Arruabarrena, Riquelme, Marcos Senna, Josico, Sorin (Hector Font 36), Jose Mari (Guayre 59), Forlan (Roger 83).
Lille: Sylva - Chalme, Tavlaridis, Vitakic, Tafforeau, Lichtsteiner (Moussilou 70), Dumont, Bodmer, Makoun, Dernis (Acimovic 60), Odemwingie (Mirallas 75).

Dec 7
Benfica 2 (Geovanni 16, Beto 34)
Manchester United 1 (Scholes 6)
HT: 2-1. **Att:** 61,000. **Ref:** Vassaras (Gre)
Benfica: Quim - Alcides, Luisao, Anderson, Leo (Ricardo Rocha 89), Petit, Beto, Nuno Assis (Joao Pereira 73), Nelson, Nuno Gomes, Geovanni (Mantorras 81).
Man Utd: Van der Sar - Neville, Ferdinand, Silvestre, O'Shea (Richardson 85), Cristiano Ronaldo (Park 67), Smith, Scholes, Giggs (Saha 60), Rooney, Van Nistelrooy.

GROUP D – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Villarreal	6	2	4	0	3	1	10
Benfica	6	2	2	2	5	5	8
Lille	6	1	3	2	1	2	6
Man Utd	6	1	3	2	3	4	6

Sep 14 Benfica-Lille 1-0
Sep 14 Villarreal-Manchester United 0-0
Sep 27 Lille-Villarreal 0-0
Sep 27 Manchester United-Benfica 2-1
Oct 18 Manchester United-Lille 0-0
Oct 18 Villarreal-Benfica 1-1
Nov 2 Lille-Manchester United 1-0
Nov 2 Benfica-Villarreal 0-1
Nov 22 Manchester United-Villarreal 0-0
Nov 22 Lille-Benfica 0-0
Dec 7 Villarreal-Lille 1-0
Dec 7 Benfica-Manchester United 2-1

Group E

Nov 23
Fenerbahce (Tur) 0
Milan (Ita) 4 (Shevchenko 16, 51, 70, 76)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 50,000. **Ref:** Hauge (Nor)
Fenerbahce: Volkan - Serkan, Servet, Onder, Deniz, Selcuk (Kemal 28), Umit, Appiah, Mehmet (Nobre 58), Tuncay, Anelka.
Milan: Dida - Simic, Nesta, Maldini, Serginho, Gattuso (Vogel 80), Pirlo, Seedorf, Kaka (Rui Costa 19), Gilardino (Vieri 75), Shevchenko.

Nov 23
Schalke (Ger) 3 (Kobiashvili pen 18, 72, pen 79)
PSV Eindhoven (Hol) 0
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 53,994. **Ref:** Michel (Slk)
Schalke: Rost - Altintop, Bordon, Rodriguez, Krstajic, Poulsen, Ernst, Varela (Asamoah 73), Lincoln, Kobiashvili (Bajramovic 89), Kuranyi (Sand 85).
PSV: Gomes - Reiziger (Sibon 78), Ooijer, Alex, Lamey, Afellay, Simons (Lucius 46), Cocu, Farfan, Robert, Aissati (Vennegoor of Hesselink 46).

Dec 6
Milan 3 (Pirlo 42, Kaka 52, 60)
Schalke 2 (Poulsen 44, Lincoln 67)
HT: 1-1. **Att:** 43,816. **Ref:** Mejuto Gonzalez (Spa)
Milan: Dida - Stam, Nesta, Maldini (Simic 31; Kaladze 79), Serginho, Gattuso, Pirlo, Kaka, Seedorf, Inzaghi (Gilardino 85), Shevchenko.
Schalke: Rost - Rafinha, Bordon, Rodriguez, Krstajic (Larsen 84), Poulsen, Ernst (Asamoah 46), Lincoln, Altintop, Kobiashvili, Kuranyi (Sand 84).

Dec 6
PSV Eindhoven 2 (Cocu 14, Farfan 85)
Fenerbahce 0
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 35,000. **Ref:** Poulat (Fra)
PSV: Gomes - Lucius, Ooijer, Alex, Lamey, Simons, Afellay (Aissati 25), Cocu, Farfan, Vennegoor of Hesselink, Robert (Reiziger 67).
Fenerbahce: Volkan - Serkan, Onder, Fabio Luciano, Umit, Appiah, Marco Aurelio, Tuncay, Alex, Nobre (Semih 79), Anelka (Mehmet 65).

GROUP E – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Milan	6	3	2	1	12	6	11
PSV	6	3	1	2	4	6	10
Schalke	6	2	2	2	12	9	8
Fenerbahce	6	1	1	4	7	14	4

Sep 13 Milan-Fenerbahce 3-1
Sep 13 PSV-Schalke 1-0
Sep 28 Schalke-Milan 2-2
Sep 28 Fenerbahce-PSV 3-0
Oct 19 Fenerbahce-Schalke 3-3
Oct 19 Milan-PSV 0-0
Nov 1 Schalke-Fenerbahce 2-0
Nov 1 PSV-Milan 1-0
Nov 23 Fenerbahce-Milan 0-4
Nov 23 Schalke-PSV 3-0
Dec 6 Milan-Schalke 3-2
Dec 6 PSV-Fenerbahce 2-0

Group F

Nov 23
Real Madrid (Spa) 1 (Guti 42)
Lyon (Fra) 1 (Carew 72)
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 67,302. **Ref:** De Bleeckere (Blg)
Real Madrid: Casillas - Diogo, Pavon, Ivan Helguera, Roberto Carlos, Pablo Garcia, Sergio Ramos, Beckham (Michel Salgado 78), Guti, Zidane (Julio Baptista 75), Robinho.
Lyon: Coupet - Reveillere, Cris, Cacapa, Monsoreau (Fred 69), Tiago, Diarra, Juninho (Clement 90), Govou (Wiltord 69), Carew, Malouda.

Nov 23
Rosenborg (Nor) 1 (Helstad 88)
Olympiakos (Gre) 1 (Rivaldo 25)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 17,450. **Ref:** Allaerts (Blg)
Rosenborg: E Johnsen - Basma, Riseth, Kvarme, Dorsin, Strand (Helstad 27), Solli, Skjelbred (Winsnes 10), Braaten (Odegaard 63), F Johnsen, Storflor.
Olympiakos: Nikopolidis - Pantos, Anatolakis, Schurrer, Erol, Kafes, Toure, Stoltidis, Babangida (Okkas 71), Rivaldo (Maric 86), Dani. *Sent off: Pantos 85min.*

Dec 6
Lyon 2 (Benzema 33, Fred 90)
Rosenborg 1 (Braaten 68)
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 40,425. **Ref:** Dauden Ibanez (Spa)
Lyon: Vercoutre - Reveillere (Clerc 83), Cris, Diatta, Monsoreau, Pedretti, Benzema (Beynie 90), Clement, Wiltord, Carew (Fred 55), Ben Arfa.
Rosenborg: E Johnsen - Basma, Kvarme, Lago, Dorsin, Winsnes, Riseth (Tettey 81), F Johnsen, Braaten, Helstad (Odegaard 57), Storflor (Eguren 83).

Dec 6
Olympiakos 2 (Erol 50, Rivaldo 87)
Real Madrid 1 (Sergio Ramos 7)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 35,000. **Ref:** Milton Nielsen (Den)
Olympiakos: Nikopolidis - Mavrogenidis, Kapsis (Kostoulas 65), Schurrer, Erol, Toure, Stoltidis, Kafes (Babangida 80), Rivaldo, Dani (Okkas 58), Djordjevic.
Real Madrid: Diego Lopez - Diogo, Pavon, Sergio Ramos, Raul Bravo, Balboa (Adrian Martin 58), De la Red (Javi Garcia 81), Gravesen, Julio Baptista, Robinho (Jurado 80), Soldado.

GROUP F – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Lyon	6	5	1	0	13	4	16
Real Madrid	6	3	1	2	10	8	10
Rosenborg	6	1	1	4	6	11	4
Olympiakos	6	1	1	4	7	13	4

Sep 13 Lyon-Real Madrid 3-0
Sep 13 Olympiakos-Rosenborg 1-3
Sep 28 Rosenborg-Lyon 0-1
Sep 28 Real Madrid-Olympiakos 2-1
Oct 19 Real Madrid-Rosenborg 4-1
Oct 19 Lyon-Olympiakos 2-1
Nov 1 Rosenborg-Real Madrid 0-2
Nov 1 Olympiakos-Lyon 1-4
Nov 23 Real Madrid-Lyon 1-1
Nov 23 Rosenborg-Olympiakos 1-1
Dec 6 Lyon-Rosenborg 2-1
Dec 6 Olympiakos-Real Madrid 2-1

Group G

Nov 23
Anderlecht (Blg) 0
Chelsea (Eng) 2 (Crespo 8, Ricardo Carvalho 15)
HT: 0-2. **Att:** 21,845. **Ref:** Farina (Ita)
Anderlecht: Proto - Zewlakow, Kompany, Tihinen, Deschacht, Vanden Borre, Vanderhaeghe (Iachtchouk 46), Goor, Wilhelmsson, Serhat (Ehret 75), Mpenza (Zetterberg 60).
Chelsea: Cech - Gallas, Terry, Ricardo Carvalho, Del Horno, Essien, J Cole (Diarra 63), Lampard, Gudjohnsen (Geremi 78), Duff, Crespo (C Cole 86).

Nov 23
Liverpool (Eng) 0
Betis (Spa) 0
Att: 42,077. **Ref:** Poulat (Fra)
Liverpool: Reina - Finnan, Carragher, Hyypia, Riise, Gerrard (Potter 89), Sissoko, Hamann, Zenden, Crouch (Kewell 84), Morientes (Cisse 67).
Betis: Doblas - Melli, Juanito, Rivas, Oscar Lopez, Marcos Assuncao (Capi 70), Rivera, Joaquin, Arzu, Xisco, Fernando (Israel 78).

Dec 6
Chelsea 0
Liverpool 0
Att: 41,598. **Ref:** Fandel (Ger)
Chelsea: Cech - Paulo Ferreira (Del Horno 46), Ricardo Carvalho, Terry, Gallas, Essien, Gudjohnsen, Lampard, Robben (C Cole 73), Duff (Wright-Phillips 73), Drogba.
Liverpool: Reina - Finnan, Carragher, Hyypia, Traore, Gerrard, Hamann, Sissoko, Riise (Kewell 60), Luis Garcia (Sinama-Pongolle 80), Crouch (Morientes 69).

Dec 6
Betis 0
Anderlecht 1 (Kompany 44)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 30,000. **Ref:** Ceferin (Sln)
Betis: Doblas - Oscar Lopez, Lembo, Rivas, Castellini, Israel (Joaquin 46), Rivera, Juande (Marcos Assuncao 70), Juanlu (Xisco 46), Capi, Fernando.
Anderlecht: Zitka - Juhasz, Kompany, Tiote (Zetterberg 83), Deschacht, Lovre (Tihinen 69), Delorge, Goor, Baseggio (Zewlakow 69), Pujol, Iachtchouk.

GROUP G – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Liverpool	6	3	3	0	6	1	12
Chelsea	6	3	2	1	7	1	11
Betis	6	2	1	3	3	7	7
Anderlecht	6	1	0	5	1	8	3

Sep 13 Betis-Liverpool 1-2
Sep 13 Chelsea-Anderlecht 1-0
Sep 28 Liverpool-Chelsea 0-0
Sep 28 Anderlecht-Betis 0-1
Oct 19 Anderlecht-Liverpool 0-1
Oct 19 Chelsea-Betis 4-0
Nov 1 Liverpool-Anderlecht 3-0
Nov 1 Betis-Chelsea 1-0
Nov 23 Anderlecht-Chelsea 0-2
Nov 23 Liverpool-Betis 0-0
Dec 6 Chelsea-Liverpool 0-0
Dec 6 Betis-Anderlecht 0-1

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Group H

Nov 23
FC Porto (Por) 1 (Lopez 60)
Rangers (Sco) 1 (McCormack 83)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 48,000. **Ref:** Fandel (Ger)
Porto: Vitor Baia - Bosingwa, Pedro Emanuel (Hugo Almeida 46), Pepe, Cesar Peixoto, Gonzalez, Paulo Assuncao, Diego (Bruno Alves 63), Jorginho, Lopez, Ricardo Quaresma.
Rangers: Waterreus - Ricksen, Andrews, Kyrgiakos, Murray, Hemdani, Namouchi, A Rae (Thompson 64), Ferguson, Lovenkrands (Burke 77), Jeffers (McCormack 75).

Nov 23
Internazionale (Ita) 4 (Figo 27, Adriano 41, 59, 74)
Artmedia Bratislava (Slk) 0
HT: 2-0. **Ref:** Riley (Eng)
Match played behind closed doors
Inter: Julio Cesar - J Zanetti, Cordoba (C Zanetti 67), Samuel, Wome, Figo (Burdisso 46), Cambiasso, Veron (Stankovic 60), Solari, Recoba, Adriano.
Artmedia: Cobej - Petras, Debnar, Durica, Urbanek (Stano 79), Vascak (Mikulic 68), Kozak (Tchur 68), Borbely, Fodrek, Obzera, Halenar.

Dec 6
Rangers 1 (Lovenkrands 38)
Internazionale 1 (Adriano 30)
HT: 1-1. **Att:** 49,170. **Ref:** Plautz (Aut)
Rangers: Waterreus - Ricksen, Andrews, Kyrgiakos, Murray, Burke, Malcolm, Ferguson, Namouchi, Buffel, Lovenkrands.
Inter: Toldo - Andreolli (J Zanetti 68), Mihajlovic, Materazzi (Momente 40), Burdisso, Solari, C Zanetti, Pizarro, Wome, Martins, Adriano (Boumsong 82). *Sent off: C Zanetti 87min.*

Dec 6
Artmedia Bratislava 0
FC Porto 0
Att: 9,542. **Ref:** Merk (Ger)
Artmedia: Cobej - Petras, Debnar, Durica, Urbanek, Stano, Obzera (Halenar 88), Kozak, Borbely, Fodrek, Hartig (Vascak 61).
Porto: Vitor Baia - Ricardo Costa, Pepe, Pedro Emanuel (Bosingwa 59), Cesar Peixoto, Gonzalez, Paulo Assuncao, Diego (Hugo Almeida 46), Ricardo Quaresma (Jorginho 72), McCarthy, Lopez.

GROUP H – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Inter	6	4	1	1	9	4	13
Rangers	6	1	4	1	7	7	7
Artmedia	6	1	3	2	5	9	6
FC Porto	6	1	2	3	8	9	5

Sep 13	Artmedia-Internazionale	0-1
Sep 13	Rangers-FC Porto	3-2
Sep 28	Internazionale-Rangers	1-0
Sep 28	FC Porto-Artmedia	2-3
Oct 19	FC Porto-Internazionale	2-0
Oct 19	Rangers-Artmedia	0-0
Nov 1	Internazionale-FC Porto	2-1
Nov 1	Artmedia-Rangers	2-2
Nov 23	FC Porto-Rangers	1-1
Nov 23	Internazionale-Artmedia	4-0
Dec 6	Rangers-Internazionale	1-1
Dec 6	Artmedia-FC Porto	0-0

Top two from each group qualified for 1st knockout round; third-placed sides enter UEFA Cup

UEFA CUP

Group stage

Group A
Nov 24: Monaco (Fra) 2 Hamburg (Ger) 0; Viking (Nor) 2 Slavia Prague (Cze) 2.
Nov 30: CSKA Sofia (Bul) 2 Viking 0; Slavia Prague 0 Monaco 2.

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Monaco	3	2	0	1	4	1	6
Hamburg	3	2	0	1	3	2	6
Slavia Prague	3	1	1	1	6	6	4
Viking	4	1	1	2	3	6	4
CSKA Sofia	3	1	0	2	4	5	3

Group B
Nov 23: Lokomotiv Moscow (Rus) 4 Brondby (Den) 2.
Nov 24: Espanyol (Spa) 1 Palermo (Ita) 1.
Nov 30: Brondby 1 Espanyol 1; Maccabi Petach Tikva (Isr) 0 Lokomotiv Moscow 4.

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Lokomotiv M	4	2	1	1	8	3	7
Palermo	3	1	2	0	3	2	5
Espanyol	3	1	2	0	3	2	5
Brondby	3	1	1	1	5	5	4
M Petach Tikva	3	0	0	3	1	8	0

Group C
Nov 24: Halmstads (Swe) 1 Sampdoria (Ita) 3; Hertha Berlin (Ger) 0 Lens (Fra) 0.
Nov 30: Sampdoria 0 Hertha Berlin 0; Steaua Bucharest (Rom) 3 Halmstads 0.

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Steaua	3	2	1	0	7	0	7
Sampdoria	3	1	2	0	3	1	5
Hertha	3	1	2	0	1	0	5
Lens	3	1	1	1	5	4	4
Halmstads	4	0	0	4	1	12	0

Group D
Nov 24: AZ Alkmaar (Hol) 0 Middlesbrough (Eng) 0; Dnipro (Ukr) 0 Litex Lovech (Bul) 2.
Nov 30: Grasshopper (Swi) 2 Dnipro 3; Litex Lovech 0 AZ Alkmaar 2.

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Middlesbrough	3	2	1	0	4	0	7
AZ	3	2	1	0	4	1	7
Litex Lovech	3	2	0	1	4	3	6
Dnipro	4	1	0	3	4	9	3
Grasshopper	3	0	0	3	3	6	0

Group E
Nov 24: Roma (Ita) 1 Strasbourg (Fra) 1; Tromso (Nor) 3 Red Star Belgrade (Ser) 1.
Dec 1: Basle (Swi) 4 Tromso 3; Red Star Belgrade 3 Roma 1.

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Strasbourg	3	2	1	0	5	1	7
Basle	3	2	0	1	6	6	6
Roma	3	1	1	1	4	5	4
Red Star B	3	1	0	2	5	6	3
Tromso	4	1	0	3	7	9	3

Group F
Nov 24: CSKA Moscow (Rus) 2 Levski Sofia (Bul) 1; Marseille (Fra) 1 Heerenveen (Hol) 0.
Dec 1: Dinamo Bucharest (Rom) 1 CSKA Moscow 0; Levski Sofia 1 Marseille 0.

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Marseille	3	2	0	1	3	2	6
Levski Sofia	3	2	0	1	3	2	6
Dinamo Buch'st	3	1	1	1	1	1	4
CSKA Moscow	4	1	1	2	3	4	4
Heerenveen	3	0	2	1	0	1	2

Group G
Nov 24: PAOK Salonika (Gre) 1 Stuttgart (Ger) 2; Shakhtar Donetsk (Ukr) 0 Rapid Bucharest (Rom) 1.
Dec 1: Rapid Bucharest 1 PAOK Salonika 0; Rennes (Fra) 0 Shakhtar Donetsk 1.

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Rapid Buch'st	3	3	0	0	4	0	9
Shakhtar	4	3	0	1	4	1	9
Stuttgart	3	2	0	1	4	3	6
PAOK Salonika	3	0	0	3	1	4	0
Rennes	3	0	0	3	0	5	0

Group H
Nov 24: Guimaraes (Por) 1 Bolton (Eng) 1; Zenit St Petersburg (Rus) 2 Sevilla (Spa) 1.
Dec 1: Besiktas (Tur) 1 Zenit St Petersburg 1; Sevilla 3 Guimaraes 1.

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Zenit	4	2	1	1	5	4	7
Sevilla	3	2	0	1	7	3	6
Bolton	3	1	2	0	3	2	5
Besiktas	3	0	2	1	2	5	2
Guimaraes	3	0	1	2	3	6	1

Teams play all group rivals once; top three from each group qualify for 1st knockout round, where they are joined by the eight third-placed teams from the Champions League group stage

AUSTRIA

Nov 19: Rapid Wien 3 Sturm Graz 1; Mattersburg 1 Pasching 2; SV Ried 3 Wacker Tirol 0; Admira 0 Austria Wien 1.
Nov 20: Grazer AK 3 Salzburg 1.
Nov 26: Sturm Graz 1 Admira 1; Wacker Tirol 0 Rapid Wien 0; Pasching 0 SV Ried 1; Salzburg 3 Mattersburg 1.
Dec 3: Rapid Wien 3 Pasching 1; Sturm Graz 2 Wacker Tirol 3; Mattersburg 0 Austria Wien 2; Admira 2 Grazer AK 0.
Dec 4: SV Ried 2 Salzburg 1.
Dec 8: Wacker Tirol 4 Admira 0; Pasching 3 Sturm Graz 1; Austria Wien 3 SV Ried 0; Grazer AK 3 Mattersburg 0.

AUSTRIA

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Austria Wien	21	12	4	5	28	17	40
Salzburg	21	12	1	8	31	24	37
Rapid Wien	21	9	7	5	36	24	34
Grazer AK	21	10	4	7	32	23	34
Pasching	22	9	6	7	27	20	33
SV Ried	22	8	9	5	33	28	33
Wacker Tirol	22	6	9	7	26	30	27
Sturm Graz	22	6	7	9	27	34	25
Mattersburg	22	6	4	12	24	38	22
Admira	22	3	3	16	24	50	12

BELGIUM

Saturday, November 19
Beveren 5 (Junior 25, Dissa 32, 61, Seka 52, Gervinho 79)
Cercle Brugge 1 (Valenta 85) Att: 3,000

FC Brussels 3 (Leonard og 38, Gorius 43, Nicoise 89)
Standard 1 (Sergio Conceicao 25) Att: 10,000

Charleroi 2 (Defays 28, Sterchele 85)
Gent 0 Att: 10,550

Club Brugge 4 (Portillo 47, Leko 55, Lange 67, Dufer 82)
La Louviere 0 Att: 23,609

Lokeren 2 (Kristinsson pen 22, Joao Carlos 85)
Zulte-Waregem 3 (Meert 10, 35, Salou 51) Att: 6,000

St Truiden 1 (Stolica 81)
Germinal Beerschot 2 (De Roeck 30, Dosunmu 56) Att: 7,000

Sunday, November 20
Lierse 1 (Fassotte 90)
Genk 2 (Engelaar 13, Soetaers 38) Att: 7,543

Roeselare 5 (Eloi 22, 69, 77, 88, Coquelet 61)
Mouscron 0 Att: 5,000

Westerlo 2 (Utaka 14, Coelho pen 77)
Anderlecht 1 (Zetterberg pen 48) Att: 8,200

Sunday, November 27
Cercle Brugge 0
Club Brugge 1 (Balaban 34) Att: 19,500

Genk 2 (Soetaers 37, Peeters 85)
St Truiden 0 Att: 21,767

Friday, December 2
Anderlecht 3 (Tihinen 43, Mpenza 45, 62)
Gent 0 Att: 24,378

Saturday, December 3
Charleroi 0
La Louviere 2 (Guilmot 7, 90) Att: 12,434

Club Brugge 2 (Balaban 63, 89)
Germinal Beerschot 0 Att: 23,478

Lierse 1 (Tohoua 3)
FC Brussels 1 (Espartero 67) Att: 4,500

Lokeren 2 (Kristinsson 46, Camara 57)
Cercle Brugge 1 (Dekelver 66) Att: 4,971

St Truiden 3 (Van Ghyseghem og 8, Stolica 54, Hajnal 75)
Mouscron 6 (Tailson 4, 63, Custovic 18, 55, Noukeu 47, Oussalah 67) Att: 5,500

Standard 0
Roeselare 0 Att: 26,000

Westerlo 2 (Coelho 5, 11)
Zulte-Waregem 2 (Meert 42, Leleu 70) Att: 6,000

Sunday, December 4
Beveren 0
Genk 2 (Beslija 56, Chatelle 90) Att: 4,500

BELGIUM

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Anderlecht	15	9	5	1	38	14	32
Standard	15	10	2	3	25	15	32
Club Brugge	16	9	4	3	25	15	31
Genk	16	8	5	3	27	17	29
Zulte-Waregem	15	8	3	4	29	24	27
Lokeren	15	8	3	4	23	20	27
Westerlo	15	7	4	4	21	12	25
FC Brussels	15	5	6	4	19	16	21
Roeselare	15	5	4	6	26	21	19
Gent	15	5	4	6	18	20	19
Charleroi	15	4	6	5	17	19	18
Cercle Brugge	16	5	2	9	19	27	17
Beveren	15	5	1	9	18	23	16
Mouscron	15	5	1	9	19	28	16
La Louviere	15	4	4	7	16	28	16
St Truiden	16	4	1	11	17	28	13
Germinal B	15	3	3	9	17	30	12
Lierse	15	1	6	8	7	24	9

LEADING GOALSCORERS
11 Mohammed Tchite (Standard)
10 Mbo Mpenza (Anderlecht)

BULGARIA

Nov 19: Belasitsa 1 Marek 0; CSKA 7 Rodopa 0; Levski 4 Botev 1; Naftex 1 Vihren 0.
Nov 20: Beroe 1 Lokomotiv Sofia 2; Lokomotiv Plovdiv 1 Lovech 2; Pirin 1922 0 Slavia 1.
Nov 26: Botev 3 Naftex 3; Marek 1 Cherno More 1; Rodopa 2 Beroe 2; Slavia 1 CSKA 2; Vihren 1 Pirin 1922 1.
Nov 27: Belasitsa 1 Lokomotiv Plovdiv 1.
Dec 3: Beroe 3 Slavia 2; Cherno More 0 Lokomotiv Sofia 2; Pirin 1922 0 Botev 0.
Dec 4: CSKA 6 Vihren 0; Levski 2 Belasitsa 0; Lokomotiv Plovdiv 2 Marek 0; Naftex 0 Lovech 2.

BULGARIA

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
CSKA	14	13	1	0	53	10	40
Levski	13	10	3	0	38	14	33
Lok Sofia	14	10	0	4	26	12	30
Lovech	13	8	2	3	24	10	26
Lok Plovdiv	14	7	3	4	26	21	24
Vihren	14	7	1	6	21	26	22
Cherno More	14	5	2	7	15	18	17
Slavia	14	5	2	7	12	17	17
Beroe	14	4	4	6	19	25	16
Belasitsa	14	4	2	8	15	24	14
Botev	14	2	6	6	11	23	12
Rodopa	14	3	3	8	12	28	12
Pirin 1922	14	2	5	7	10	21	11
Marek	14	2	3	9	9	24	9
Naftex	14	2	3	9	8	26	9

Pirin Blagoevgrad have been demoted to the lower leagues because of failure to pay off debts; results annulled

CROATIA

Nov 19: Osijek 1 Kamen Ingrad 0; Zagreb 1 Medimurje 0; Hajduk 1 Pula 1; Slaven 4 Cibalia 2; Inter 0 Rijeka 2.
Nov 20: Varteks 2 Dinamo 5.
Nov 26: Inter 2 Osijek 3; Rijeka 3 Varteks 1; Dinamo 4 Slaven 1; Cibalia 1 Hajduk 0; Pula 2 Zagreb 0; Medimurje 0 Kamen Ingrad 3.
Dec 3: Osijek 1 Medimurje 1; Kamen Ingrad 2 Pula 1; Zagreb 1 Cibalia 0; Slaven 1 Rijeka 3; Varteks 2 Inter 0.
Dec 4: Hajduk 1 Dinamo 0.

CROATIA

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Dinamo	18	14	2	2	47	8	44
Rijeka	18	11	3	4	34	23	36
Kamen Ingrad	18	8	4	6	23	20	28
Varteks	18	9	1	8	30	29	28
Osijek	18	8	3	7	21	28	27
Hajduk	18	6	7	5	24	16	25
Zagreb	18	7	3	8	16	21	24
Cibalia	18	7	2	9	19	28	23
Medimurje	18	5	5	8	21	29	20
Pula	18	5	4	9	21	24	19
Slaven	18	3	6	9	20	31	15
Inter	18	3	4	11	11	30	13

YYePG Proudly Presents, Thx for Support

CZECH REPUBLIC

Nov 19: Liberec 3 Slavia 3; Sparta 4 Mlada Boleslav 2; Slovacko 2 Olomouc 2; Ostrava 2 Jablonec 1.
Nov 20: Most 1 Pribram 0; Brno 3 Plzen 1; Jihlava 0 Zlin 0.
Nov 21: Chmel Blsany 0 Teplice 0.
Nov 23: Jablonec 3 Most 0.
Nov 26: Zlin 3 Sparta 2; Most 1 Liberec 2.
Nov 27: Jablonec 0 Teplice 0; Olomouc 1 Jihlava 2; Slavia 0 Chmel Blsany 0; Pribram 1 Slovacko 1; Mlada Boleslav 2 Brno 1.
Nov 28: Plzen 0 Ostrava 0.
Dec 3: Liberec 1 Zlin 0; Sparta 1 Pribram 1; Slovacko 1 Plzen 0; Ostrava 1 Slavia 3.
Dec 4: Brno 1 Most 0; Chmel Blsany 1 Jablonec 0.
Dec 5: Teplice 1 Olomouc 0.

CZECH REPUBLIC

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Liberec	15	10	4	1	26	11	34
Teplice	15	8	5	2	19	10	29
Slavia	15	7	5	3	28	18	26
Olomouc	15	7	2	6	22	23	23
Pribram	15	5	6	4	21	17	21
Jablonec	15	6	3	6	22	19	21
Mlada Boleslav	14	6	3	5	23	23	21
Ostrava	15	5	5	5	15	16	20
Zlin	15	5	4	6	15	16	19
Plzen	15	4	5	6	15	18	17
Sparta	15	5	2	8	23	27	17
Jihlava	14	4	5	5	12	18	17
Slovacko	15	3	7	5	15	18	16
Chmel Blsany	15	3	6	6	14	25	15
Brno	15	3	5	7	17	21	14
Most	15	4	1	10	14	21	13

DENMARK

Nov 19: Brondby 1 Viborg 0.
Nov 20: FC Copenhagen 1 AGF 1; Horsens 3 Midtjylland 4; Nordsjaelland 0 AaB 1; Silkeborg 2 Esbjerg 1; SonderjyskE 2 OB 4.
Nov 26: OB 0 Brondby 1.
Nov 27: AGF 2 Silkeborg 0; Esbjerg 1 Horsens 1; Midtjylland 2 SonderjyskE 2; Viborg 4 Nordsjaelland 1; AaB 0 FC Copenhagen 2.
Dec 3: Midtjylland 1 OB 2.
Dec 4: FC Copenhagen 3 Viborg 1; Horsens 2 AGF 1; Nordsjaelland 0 Brondby 2; Silkeborg 1 AaB 4; SonderjyskE 1 Esbjerg 3.

DENMARK

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
FC Copenhagen	20	15	4	1	40	13	49
Brondby	20	14	3	3	40	17	45
Viborg	20	11	4	5	38	24	37
OB	20	9	5	6	30	22	32
AaB	20	7	6	7	28	25	27
Nordsjaelland	20	6	7	7	29	27	25
Esbjerg	20	6	5	9	26	30	23
Midtjylland	20	5	6	9	27	39	21
Silkeborg	20	5	5	10	17	32	20
Horsens	20	3	10	7	14	26	19
AGF	20	3	7	10	27	41	16
SonderjyskE	20	3	4	13	26	46	13

ENGLAND

Saturday, November 19
Charlton 1 (Ambrose 65)
Manchester Utd 3 (Smith 37, Van Nistelrooy 70, 85) Att: 26,730

Chelsea 3 (J Cole 47, Crespo 52, Duff 90)
Newcastle 0 Att: 42,268

Liverpool 3 (Zenden 23, Cisse 39, Morientes 80)
Portsmouth 0 Att: 44,394

Manchester City 0
Blackburn 0 Att: 44,032

Sunderland 1 (Whitehead pen 90)
Aston Villa 3 (Phillips 55, Barry 82, Baros 83) Att: 39,707

West Bromwich 4 (Ellington pen 45, 69, Clement 51, Earnshaw 90)
Everton 0 Att: 24,784

Wigan 2 (Camara 28, Bullard 45)
Arsenal 3 (Van Persie 11, Henry 21, 41) Att: 25,004

Sunday, November 20
Middlesbrough 3 (Morrison 64, Aiyegbeni 76, Hasselbaink 83)
Fulham 2 (John 8, Diop 69) Att: 27,599

Tottenham 1 (Hossam 16)
West Ham 1 (Ferdinand 90) Att: 36,154

Saturday, November 26
Arsenal 3 (Fabregas 4, Henry 45, Van Persie 90)
Blackburn 0 Att: 38,192

Aston Villa 1 (Davis 69)
Charlton 0 Att: 30,023

Manchester City 0
Liverpool 1 (Riise 59) Att: 47,105

Portsmouth 0
Chelsea 2 (Crespo 27, Lampard pen 67) Att: 20,182

Sunderland 0
Birmingham 1 (Gray 68) Att: 32,442

Wigan 1 (McCulloch 88)
Tottenham 2 (Keane 8, Davids 77) Att: 22,611

Sunday, November 27
Everton 1 (Yobo 46)
Newcastle 0 Att: 36,207

Fulham 2 (McBride 4, 18)
Bolton 1 (Legwinski og 90) Att: 19,768

Middlesbrough 2 (Viduka 12, Aiyegbeni pen 66)
West Bromwich 2 (Ellington 18, Kanu 57) Att: 27,041

West Ham 1 (Harewood 2)
Manchester Utd 2 (Rooney 48, O'Shea 56) Att: 34,755

Wednesday, November 30
Sunderland 0
Liverpool 2 (Luis Garcia 30, Gerrard 45) Att: 32,697

Saturday, December 3
Blackburn 0
Everton 2 (McFadden 28, Arteta 45) Att: 22,064

Bolton 2 (Faye 20, Giannakopoulos 32)
Arsenal 0 Att: 26,792

Chelsea 1 (Terry 62)
Middlesbrough 0 Att: 41,666

Liverpool 3 (Pollitt og 19, Crouch 42, Luis Garcia 70)
Wigan 0 Att: 44,098

Manchester Utd 3 (Scholes 20, Rooney 80, Van Nistelrooy 84)
Portsmouth 0 Att: 67,684

Newcastle 1 (Shearer pen 32)
Aston Villa 1 (McCann 75) Att: 52,267

Tottenham 3 (Hossam 37, Keane 51, Carrick 77)
Sunderland 2 (Whitehead 16, Le Tallec 60) Att: 36,244

West Bromwich 0
Fulham 0 Att: 23,144

Sunday, December 4
Charlton 2 (Bent 36, Bothroyd 73)
Manchester City 5 (Cole 25, 84, Sinclair 37, Barton 69, Vassell 79) Att: 25,289

Monday, December 5
Birmingham 1 (Heskey 11)
West Ham 2 (Zamora 36, Harewood 45) Att: 24,010

ENGLAND

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Chelsea	15	13	1	1	34	7	40
Man Utd	14	9	3	2	24	13	30
Liverpool	14	8	4	2	18	8	28
Tottenham	15	7	6	2	19	12	27
Arsenal	14	8	2	4	22	12	26
Bolton	14	8	2	4	17	13	26
Wigan	14	8	1	5	16	13	25
Man City	15	7	3	5	20	14	24
West Ham	14	6	4	4	19	14	22
Middlesbrough	15	5	4	6	20	21	19
Newcastle	15	5	4	6	13	15	19
Charlton	14	6	1	7	19	23	19
Blackburn	15	5	3	7	15	20	18
Fulham	15	4	4	7	16	20	16
Aston Villa	15	4	4	7	15	23	16
Everton	14	5	1	8	7	16	16
West Brom	15	3	4	8	15	24	13
Portsmouth	15	2	4	9	11	23	10
Birmingham	14	2	3	9	9	19	9
Sunderland	16	1	2	13	14	33	5

LEADING GOALSCORERS
11 Frank Lampard (Chelsea)
11 Ruud Van Nistelrooy (Manchester Utd)
8 Yakubu Aiyegbeni (Middlesbrough)
8 Darren Bent (Charlton)
8 Thierry Henry (Arsenal)

FRANCE

Saturday, November 19
Ajaccio 0
Sochaux 1 (Erding 90) Att: 4,000

Auxerre 3 (Lachuer 18, Pieroni pen 66, 72)
Lille 2 (Bodmer pen 6, Cabaye 23) Att: 15,000

Lens 0
Metz 0 Att: 31,926

Lyon 2 (Cris 27, 76)
Troyes 1 (Nivet 21) Att: 37,940

Marseille 2 (Oruma 28, Ribery 73)
Nantes 1 (Bamogo 61) Att: 48,000

Monaco 1 (Meriem 55)
Saint-Etienne 0 Att: 16,234

Nancy 1 (Kim 75)
Le Mans 0 Att: 15,010

Strasbourg 0
Nice 0 Att: 14,966

Sunday, November 20
Bordeaux 0
Paris SG 2 (Yepes 36, Pauleta 51) Att: 35,000

Rennes 4 (Gourcuff 28, Ouaddou 49, Frei 56, Monterrubio pen 90)
Toulouse 1 (Congre 82) Att: 20,492

Friday, November 25
Le Mans 0
Auxerre 2 (Pieroni 19, Lachuer 67) Att: 10,347

Saturday, November 26
Lille 1 (Aboucherouane 53)
Nancy 0 Att: 11,148

Nice 1 (Bagayoko 21)
Lyon 1 (Govou 76) Att: 12,849

Saint-Etienne 1 (Ilunga 2)
Bordeaux 1 (Faubert 74) Att: 34,089

Sochaux 1 (Genghini 90)
Rennes 0 Att: 15,932

Toulouse 3 (Moreira pen 17, Mathieu 59, Bonnet 90)
Ajaccio 0 Att: 14,000

Troyes 0
Metz 0 Att: 10,054

Sunday, November 27
Marseille 2 (Oruma 64, Lamouchi 76)
Monaco 1 (Meriem 18) Att: 50,000

Nantes 4 (Delhommeau 48, Bamogo 56, Dimitrijevic 59, Da Rocha 90)
Strasbourg 3 (Pagis pen 38, 49, Diane 45) Att: 26,000

Paris SG 3 (Pauleta 8, 89, Yepes 90)
Lens 4 (Thomert 2, Dindane 33, 70, Jussie 41) Att: 40,895

ESM GOLDEN SHOE STANDINGS AT 04.12.05

POS	NAME	TEAM	GOALS	FACTOR	PTS
1	Tarmo Neemelo	TVMK (Est)	41	1	41
2	Luca Toni	Fiorentina (Ita)	16	2	32
3	Miroslav Klose	Werder Bremen (Ger)	14	2	28
4	Mantas Savenas	Ekranas (Lit)	27	1	27
5	Maksim Gruznov	Trans Narva (Est)	26	1	26
6	Tomas Radzinevicius	Suduva (Lit)	25	1	25
7	Ole Martin Arst	Tromso (Nor)	16	1.5	24
	Samuel Eto'o	Barcelona (Spa)	12	2	24
	Grzegorz Piechna	Korona (Pol)	16	1.5	24
10	Jason Byrne	Shelbourne (Ire)	22	1	22
	Frank Lampard	Chelsea (Eng)	11	2	22
	Ebi Smolarek	Borussia Dortmund (Ger)	11	2	22
	David Trezeguet	Juventus (Ita)	11	2	22
	Ruud Van Nistelrooy	Manchester United (Eng)	11	2	22
15	Eduardo Da Silva	Dinamo Zagreb (Cro)	14	1.5	21
	Dmitri Kirichenko	FC Moscow (Rus)	14	1.5	21
	Egil Ostenstad	Viking (Nor)	14	1.5	21
18	Halil Altintop	Kaiserslautern (Ger)	10	2	20
	Pauleta	Paris Saint-Germain (Fra)	10	2	20
	Murat Tleshev	Irtysh (Kaz)	20	1	20

For the latest standings, updated weekly, visit www.worldsoccer.com

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Saturday, December 3
Ajaccio 0
Troyes 1 (Amzine 79) Att: 2,753

Auxerre 4 (Luyindula 3, 39, Pieroni 30, Cheyrou 90)
Nantes 0 Att: 8,760

Bordeaux 1 (Menegazzo 81)
Lille 0 Att: 19,242

Lyon 2 (Fred 5, Carew 90)
Paris SG 0 Att: 38,134

Metz 2 (Proment pen 14, 66)
Toulouse 2 (Moreira 40, Santos 90) Att: 12,367

Monaco 2 (Modesto 11, Sorlin 42)
Le Mans 0 Att: 7,385

Strasbourg 0
Sochaux 0 Att: 21,014

Sunday, December 4
Lens 2 (Thomert 32, Cousin 63)
Saint-Etienne 1 (Perrin 25) Att: 33,652

Nancy 1 (Zerka 49)
Marseille 1 (Niang 60) Att: 20,078

Rennes 1 (Frei 62)
Nice 0 Att: 23,691

FRANCE

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Lyon	17	13	4	0	29	10	43
Auxerre	17	10	2	5	26	19	32
Bordeaux	17	8	7	2	17	10	31
Lens	17	6	10	1	25	14	28
Monaco	17	8	3	6	18	13	27
Paris SG	17	8	3	6	20	17	27
Lille	17	7	5	5	23	14	26
Rennes	17	8	2	7	21	27	26
Saint-Etienne	17	6	7	4	17	12	25
Marseille	17	7	4	6	19	21	25
Le Mans	17	6	4	7	16	14	22
Nancy	17	6	3	8	18	14	21
Nantes	17	6	3	8	18	20	21
Sochaux	17	5	5	7	10	15	20
Nice	17	4	7	6	12	16	19
Toulouse	17	5	4	8	16	22	19
Troyes	17	4	6	7	14	20	18
Ajaccio	17	2	6	9	9	21	12
Metz	17	1	7	9	9	26	10
Strasbourg	17	0	8	9	8	20	8

LEADING GOALSCORERS
10 Pauleta (Paris SG)
7 Daniel Cousin (Lens)
7 Luigi Pieroni (Auxerre)
6 Peguy Luyindula (Auxerre)

GERMANY

Saturday, November 19
Arminia Bielefeld 1 (Boakye 60)
Bayern Munich 2 (Pizarro 82, 90) Att: 26,601

Borussia Dortmund 2 (Smolarek 39, 44)
Hertha 0 Att: 70,500

Kaiserslautern 1 (Blank 18)
Nurnberg 3 (Banovic 17, L Muller 78, Saenko 81) Att: 29,024

Koln 2 (Benschneider 47, Epstein 57)
Schalke 2 (Kuranyi 23, Sand 86) Att: 50,000

Mainz 2 (Noveski 70, Ruman 90)
Eintracht Frankfurt 2 (Noveski og 3, og 6) Att: 20,300

Monchengladbach 1 (Polanski 14)
Bayer Leverkusen 1 (Rolfes 5) Att: 49,068

Werder Bremen 6 (Baumann 6, Borowski 43, 52, Klose 60, 85, Naldo 72)
Wolfsburg 1 (Klimowicz 57) Att: 37,258

Sunday, November 20
Hamburg 2 (Barbarez 39, Lauth 45)
Duisburg 0 Att: 51,779

Stuttgart 2 (Tomasson 11, 67)
Hannover 2 (Hashemian 57, Yankov 68) Att: 36,000

Saturday, November 26
Bayer Leverkusen 0
Hamburg 1 (Jarolim 83) Att: 22,500

Bayern Munich 2 (Pizarro 28, 55)
Mainz 1 (Auer 33) Att: 66,000

Hannover 5 (Tarnat 13, 26, Brdaric 62, 73, Hashemian 83)
Kaiserslautern 1 (Sanogo 69) Att: 31,443

Nurnberg 1 (Kiessling 88)
Borussia Dortmund 2 (Odonkor 13, Sahin 42) Att: 25,928

Schalke 2 (Kuranyi 2, 64)
Werder Bremen 1 (Haedo Valdez 56) Att: 61,524

Wolfsburg 0
Arminia Bielefeld 0 Att: 13,996

Sunday, November 27
Eintracht Frankfurt 1 (Amanatidis 19)
Stuttgart 1 (Ljuboja 63) Att: 45,000

Hertha 2 (Basturk 68, Kovac 76)
Monchengladbach 2 (Kahe 7, Friedrich og 12) Att: 35,000

Saturday, December 3
Arminia Bielefeld 0
Schalke 1 (Poulsen 51) Att: 26,601

Borussia Dortmund 0
Hannover 2 (Cherundolo 16, Dabrowski 85) Att: 72,000

Hamburg 3 (Atouba 43, Lauth 54, Barbarez 73)
Koln 1 (Schlicke 58) Att: 55,800

Monchengladbach 0
Nurnberg 1 (Nikl 62) Att: 38,434

Stuttgart 0
Bayern Munich 0 Att: 55,000

Werder Bremen 2 (Haedo Valdez 64, Borowski 73)
Duisburg 0 Att: 38,079

Sunday, December 4
Bayer Leverkusen 1 (Berbatov 20)
Hertha 2 (Basturk 58, Marcelinho 64) Att: 22,500

Mainz 5 (Thurk pen 2, 77, Auer 36, Ruman 45, Zidan 51)
Wolfsburg 1 (Klimowicz 3) Att: 19,100

Tuesday, December 6
Duisburg 1 (Ahanfouf 5)
Koln 1 (Podolski 30) Att: 30,295

GERMANY

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Bayern Munich	15	12	2	1	31	10	38
Hamburg	15	10	4	1	25	7	34
Werder Bremen	15	10	2	3	41	19	32
Schalke	15	7	7	1	19	10	28
Hertha	15	7	4	4	25	21	25
B Dortmund	15	5	6	4	22	20	21
M'gladbach	15	5	6	4	19	17	21
Hannover	15	4	7	4	25	22	19
Stuttgart	15	3	10	2	18	17	19
Wolfsburg	15	4	6	5	15	25	18
B Leverkusen	15	4	5	6	23	25	17
A Bielefeld	15	4	4	7	17	22	16
Mainz	15	4	3	8	23	24	15
Eintracht F'furt	14	4	3	7	17	22	15
Koln	15	3	3	9	21	32	12
Nurnberg	15	3	3	9	16	28	12
Duisburg	15	2	4	9	13	29	10
Kaiserslautern	14	2	3	9	18	38	9

LEADING GOALSCORERS
14 Miroslav Klose (Werder Bremen)
11 Ebi Smolarek (Borussia Dortmund)
10 Halil Altintop (Kaiserslautern)

GREECE

Nov 19: Xanthi 1 Ionikos 1; Panathinaikos 3 Apollon 0; Atromitos 0 Olympiakos 1.
Nov 20: Panionios 1 OFI 1; Kallithea 1 PAOK 1; Iraklis 2 Larisa 1; Aigaleo 1 Levadiakos 0.
Nov 21: Akratitos 1 AEK 2.
Nov 26: Panathinaikos 2 Xanthi 1; Larisa 1 Aigaleo 1.
Nov 27: PAOK 2 Akratitos 0; OFI 0 Kallithea 0; Levadiakos 0 AEK 1; Ionikos 3 Atromitos 1; Apollon 1 Panionios 0.
Nov 28: Olympiakos 2 Iraklis 1.
Dec 3: Kallithea 0 Apollon 0; Aigaleo 1 Olympiakos 3; Atromitos 1 Panathinaikos 0.
Dec 4: Larisa 1 Levadiakos 0; Iraklis 2 Ionikos 1; Akratitos 1 OFI 1; AEK 2 PAOK 1.
Dec 5: Panionios 0 Xanthi 2.

GREECE

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Olympiakos	12	10	0	2	26	7	30
AEK	12	9	2	1	18	6	29
Panathinaikos	12	7	2	3	17	10	23
Xanthi	12	7	2	3	17	10	23
PAOK	12	5	4	3	19	11	19
Iraklis	12	5	2	5	13	15	17
Larisa	12	4	4	4	16	13	16
Aigaleo	12	3	7	2	10	11	16
Atromitos	12	4	3	5	12	12	15
Ionikos	12	3	6	3	16	18	15
OFI	12	2	6	4	9	15	12
Apollon	12	3	3	6	8	17	12
Levadiakos	12	2	4	6	7	12	10
Panionios	12	2	3	7	9	22	9
Akratitos	12	1	4	7	6	14	7
Kallithea	12	1	4	7	7	17	7

HOLLAND

Friday, November 18
Willem II 3 (Smit 10, Feher 73, Reuser 86)
Vitesse 4 (Amoah 9, 20, 70, Janssen 31) Att: 11,250

Saturday, November 19
Ajax 2 (Majstorovic og 70, Rosenberg 90)
Twente 0 Att: 45,120

Den Haag 0
NEC 1 (Takak 82) Att: 5,938

NAC 0
Utrecht 1 (Kruys 37) Att: 14,500

RKC 4 (De Ceulaer 17, Hoogendorp 65, 81, Keller 76)
PSV 4 (Farfan 14, 44, 51, Robert 90) Att: 7,400

Sunday, November 20
Groningen 0
AZ 0 Att: 12,500

Heracles 3 (Hellings 9, Calincov 76, Hirayama 87)
RBC 0 Att: 8,400

Roda JC 2 (Sergio 28, Oper 45)
Feyenoord 3 (Kuijt 25, Bahia 33, Bisewar 79) Att: 16,000

Sparta 1 (Rose 61)
Heerenveen 2 (Derveld 41, Huntelaar 53) Att: 10,349

Sunday, November 27
AZ 2 (Landzaat 32, Koevermans 89)
Roda JC 0 Att: 8,377

Feyenoord 7 (Boussaboun 8, 58, Greene 18, Kalou 35, Kuijt 78, 82, De Guzman 90)
Heracles 1 (Jansen 87) Att: 38,000

Heerenveen 2 (Bruggink 38, Norregaard 78)
RBC 0 Att: 20,200

PSV 3 (Vennegoor of Hesselink 60, 73, Kone 86)
Den Haag 0 Att: 33,000

Utrecht 1 (Tiendalli 59)
Ajax 0 Att: 22,137

Tuesday, November 29
Vitesse 4 (Janssen 3, Amoah 74, Hersi 77, 90)
RKC 2 (De Ceulaer 44, Martens 69) Att: 19,600

Wednesday, November 30
NAC 2 (Van Hooijdonk 9, Slot 82)
Groningen 2 (Cornelisse pen 18, Salmon 89) Att: 12,733

NEC 2 (Denneboom 2, Barreto 51)
Willem II 0 Att: 12,000

Twente 1 (Gerritsen 90)
Sparta 0 Att: 13,000

Friday, December 2
Heracles 0
Roda JC 1 (Sergio 13) Att: 8,173

Saturday, December 3
AZ 2 (Arveladze 1, Landzaat 73)
Heerenveen 1 (Samaras 81) Att: 8,429

PSV 3 (Vennegoor of Hesselink 53, Farfan 78, Kone 88)
NAC 0 Att: 33,000

RBC 2 (Kpaka 2, Loran 16)
Feyenoord 2 (Pardo 21, De Guzman 73) Att: 4,800

Sunday, December 4
Ajax 4 (Maduro 45, Sneijder 48, Rosenberg 84, Babel 86)
RKC 1 (Hoogendorp 43) Att: 47,812

Groningen 1 (Cornelisse 72)
Twente 0 Att: 12,106

NEC 1 (Worm 36)
Vitesse 0 Att: 12,000

Sparta 2 (Rose 25, 90)
Den Haag 3 (Kolkka 11, Bodde 44, Verhoek 79) Att: 7,320

HOLLAND

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
PSV	14	11	2	1	30	9	35
AZ	14	10	2	2	38	14	32
Feyenoord	14	10	2	2	39	16	32
NEC	14	7	3	4	16	13	24
Vitesse	14	7	2	5	27	21	23
RKC	14	7	2	5	28	25	23
Ajax	14	6	3	5	21	14	21
Heerenveen	14	6	3	5	26	22	21
Utrecht	13	6	3	4	18	14	21
Groningen	14	6	2	6	14	18	20
Twente	14	5	2	7	15	14	17
NAC	14	4	4	6	17	24	16
Roda JC	14	5	1	8	21	30	16
Heracles	14	4	3	7	14	29	15
Sparta	14	3	3	8	12	21	12
Den Haag	14	3	3	8	13	25	12
Willem II	13	2	2	9	11	25	8
RBC	14	0	4	10	8	34	4

LEADING GOALSCORERS
13 Shota Arveladze (AZ)
10 Rick Hoogendorp (RKC)
10 Klaas Jan Huntelaar (Heerenveen)
10 Dirk Kuijt (Feyenoord)

HUNGARY

Nov 19: Debrecen 3 Sopron 1; Pecs 0 Ferencvaros 0; Vasas 1 Papa 1; Diosgyor 3 Zalaegerszeg 0; Ujpest 4 Kaposvar 1; Rakospalota 1 Honved 3; Gyor 1 MTK 3.
Nov 20: Tatabanya 0 Fehervar 1.
Nov 26: Fehervar 2 Gyor 2; Sopron 5 Tatabanya 1; MTK 0 Ujpest 2; Kaposvar 1 Diosgyor 3; Zalaegerszeg 3 Vasas 0; Papa 1 Rakospalota 3; Honved 1 Pecs 1.
Nov 27: Ferencvaros 0 Debrecen 0.
Nov 29: Honved 2 MTK 2.
Dec 3: Sopron 1 Fehervar 1; Debrecen 6 Honved 1; Pecs 5 Papa 0; Rakospalota 2 Zalaegerszeg 1; Vasas 0 Kaposvar 2; Diosgyor 0 MTK 0.
Dec 4: Tatabanya 2 Ferencvaros 3; Ujpest 3 Gyor 1.

HUNGARY

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Ujpest	14	10	3	1	36	15	33
Debrecen	14	9	5	0	33	16	32
Fehervar	14	10	2	2	22	8	32
MTK	14	8	4	2	30	15	28
Honved	14	5	6	3	22	21	21
Diosgyor	14	6	3	5	16	16	21
Gyor	14	5	3	6	22	24	18
Zalaegerszeg	14	5	1	8	23	24	16
Sopron	14	4	4	6	18	19	16
Tatabanya	14	4	4	6	20	27	16
Ferencvaros	14	3	6	5	17	20	15
Pecs	14	4	2	8	20	22	14
Vasas	14	3	5	6	17	21	14
Kaposvar	14	3	4	7	12	19	13
Rakospalota	14	4	1	9	16	29	13
Papa	14	0	5	9	13	41	5

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ITALY

Saturday, November 19
Roma 1 (Totti pen 65)
Juventus 4 (Nedved 45, Ibrahimovic 56, Trezeguet 58, 61) Att: 68,816

Udinese 1 (Felipe 87)
Messina 0 Att: 15,759

Sunday, November 20
Chievo 1 (Pellissier 14)
Ascoli 1 (D'Anna og 42) Att: 5,113

Fiorentina 3 (Toni 10, 87, Jorgensen 46)
Milan 1 (Gilardino 25) Att: 43,950

Inter 2 (Figo 68, Cambiasso 81)
Parma 0 Att: 47,651

Lecce 3 (Vucinic 16, Konan 53, Cozzolino 90)
Siena 0 Att: 11, 729

Livorno 2 (Morrone 31, C Lucarelli 88)
Empoli 0 Att: 13,272

Reggina 3 (Amoruso 2, Cozza 38, Paredes 80)
Cagliari 1 (Abeijon 67) Att: 9,196

Sampdoria 2 (Diana 72, Flachi 74)
Lazio 0 Att: 22,575

Treviso 2 (Reginaldo 2, 6)
Palermo 2 (Ferri 27, Brienza 69) Att: 5,540

Saturday, November 26
Livorno 0
Chievo 0 Att: 10,768

Milan 2 (Pirlo 3, Inzaghi 90)
Lecce 1 (Konan 67) Att: 55,129

Sunday, November 27
Ascoli 1 (Ferrante 53)
Palermo 1 (Bonanni 37) Att: 9,790

Cagliari 2 (Suazo 20, 52)
Sampdoria 0 Att: 4,257

Empoli 2 (Bonetto 53, Tavano pen 60)
Lazio 3 (Dabo 28, Tare 78, Liverani 81) Att: 6,290

Juventus 3 (Mutu 37, Trezeguet 42, Del Piero 83)
Treviso 1 (Parravicini 25) Att: 27,102

Messina 1 (Di Napoli 71)
Inter 2 (Recoba 7, Cambiasso 60) Att: 24,418

Parma 1 (Corradi 89)
Udinese 2 (Barreto 45, 48) Att: 12,471

Roma 1 (Tommasi 2)
Fiorentina 1 (Toni pen 67) Att: 39,690

Siena 0
Reggina 0 Att: 6,266

Saturday, December 3
Chievo 2 (Pellissier 45, Tiribocchi 82)
Milan 1 (Kaladze 22) Att: 14,733

Inter 1 (Adriano 24)
Ascoli 0 Att: 46,122

Sunday, December 4
Fiorentina 1 (Pazzini 39)
Juventus 2 (Trezeguet 8, Camoranesi 88) Att: 43,537

Lazio 3 (Di Canio 42, Cesar 61, Tare 80)
Siena 2 (Bogdani 53, Peruzzi og 90) Att: 22,577

Lecce 2 (Cozzolino 51, Vucinic 57)
Roma 2 (Cassano 21, Nonda 45) Att: 14,241

Palermo 2 (Caracciolo 20, Makinwa 22)
Cagliari 2 (Conti 64, Bega 88) Att: 26,209

Reggina 2 (Cozza 10, De Rosa 21)
Parma 1 (Cardone 13) Att: 11,488

Sampdoria 2 (Bonazzoli 78, Flachi 86)
Empoli 0 Att: 16,803

Treviso 0
Messina 0 Att: 4,474

Udinese 0
Livorno 2 (Obodo og 9, C Lucarelli 73) Att: 15,577

ITALY

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Juventus	14	13	0	1	31	8	39
Milan	14	10	1	3	30	15	31
Inter	14	9	2	3	25	11	29
Fiorentina	14	9	2	3	29	16	29
Livorno	14	7	4	3	15	13	25
Chievo	14	6	6	2	18	13	24
Sampdoria	14	7	2	5	25	19	23
Lazio	14	6	4	4	19	19	22
Roma	14	5	5	4	21	17	20
Udinese	14	6	2	6	15	19	20
Palermo	14	4	7	3	22	21	19
Empoli	14	5	2	7	17	22	17
Reggina	14	5	1	8	15	20	16
Siena	14	4	3	7	20	26	15
Ascoli	14	2	7	5	13	17	13
Messina	14	1	6	7	11	20	9
Cagliari	14	1	6	7	12	22	9
Parma	14	2	3	9	12	25	9
Treviso	14	1	5	8	8	21	8
Lecce	14	2	2	10	11	25	8

LEADING GOALSCORERS
16 Luca Toni (Fiorentina)
11 David Trezeguet (Juventus)

KAZAKHSTAN

KAZAKHSTAN – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Aktobe Lento	30	22	4	4	50	27	70
Tobol	30	21	6	3	53	21	69
Kairat	30	18	8	4	56	22	62
Shakhtyor	30	19	2	9	37	22	59
Irtysh	30	18	3	9	51	24	57
Ordabasy	30	14	7	9	30	27	49
Yesil Bogatyr	30	15	3	12	38	25	48
Zhenis	30	11	10	9	35	23	43
Okjetpes	30	11	4	15	26	32	37
Atyrau	30	10	7	13	32	36	37
Taraz	30	10	6	14	32	36	36
Ekibastuzetc	30	8	10	12	30	32	34
FK Almaty	30	9	3	18	30	43	30
Vostok	30	9	1	20	24	49	28
Zhetysu	30	4	7	19	28	60	19
Bolat	30	0	1	29	15	88	1

Relegated: Zhetysu, Bolat
Promoted: Energetik Pavlodar, Kaisar Kyzylorda

KAZAKH CUP – Final

Nov 11 - Shymkent
Zhenis 2 (Byahanski 19, Mendes 116)
Kairat 1 (Lutu 25)
Aet. **HT:** 1-1. **90mins:** 1-1. **Att:** 8,000.
Ref: Kholmatov

POLAND

Nov 18: Legia 3 Gornik Z 2.
Nov 19: Odra 2 Lech 1; Belchatow 1 Korona 2; Arka 1 Wisla K 0; Cracovia 3 Wisla P 1; Pogon 2 Polonia 0; Gornik L 1 Amica 0.
Nov 20: Groclin 1 Zaglebie 0.
Nov 22: Wisla K 3 Cracovia 0.
Nov 25: Lech 1 Pogon 1.
Nov 26: Wisla P 0 Odra 0; Korona 3 Groclin 0; Amica 3 Belchatow 1; Gornik Z 2 Gornik L 0; Polonia 0 Arka 0; Zaglebie 3 Cracovia 1.
Nov 27: Wisla K 0 Legia 0.
Dec 2: Amica 2 Groclin 0; Polonia 2 Lech 1.
Dec 3: Zaglebie 2 Odra 0; Gornik Z 0 Belchatow 1; Legia 2 Arka 0; Wisla P 0 Pogon 0; Wisla K 1 Gornik L 0.
Dec 4: Cracovia 2 Korona 3.
Dec 6: Polonia 0 Odra 3.

TEAM OF THE MONTH NOVEMBER 2005

HOW THEY VOTED

A BOLA (Por)
Moretto (Setubal); Thuram (Juventus), Ricardo Carvalho (Chelsea), Puyol (Barcelona); Figo (Inter), Vieira (Juventus), Lampard (Chelsea), Messi (Barcelona); Ronaldinho (Barcelona), Shevchenko (Milan), Henry (Arsenal)

FANATIK (Tur)
Wachter (Hamburg); Nesta (Milan), Cris (Lyon), Puyol (Barcelona), Kobiashvili (Schalke): Lampard (Chelsea), Deisler (Bayern Munich), Davids (Tottenham); Pizarro (Bayern Munich), Ronaldinho (Barcelona), Shevchenko (Milan)

GAZZETTA DELLO SPORT (Ita)
Coupet (Lyon); Zambrotta (Juventus), Cris (Lyon), Puyol (Barcelona), Riise (Liverpool); Emerson (Juventus), Lampard (Chelsea), Ronaldinho (Barcelona), Van Persie (Arsenal); Toni (Fiorentina), Eto'o (Barcelona)

SPORT EXPRESS (Rus)
Van der Sar (Man Utd); Puyol (Barcelona), Ferdinand (Man Utd), Ujfalusi (Fiorentina); Figo (Inter), Xavi (Barcelona), Lampard (Chelsea), Cambiasso (Inter), Ronaldinho (Barcelona); Toni (Fiorentina), Shevchenko (Milan)

VOETBAL INTERNATIONAL (Hol)
Coupet (Lyon); Puyol (Barcelona), Cris (Lyon), Lucio (Bayern Munich); Lampard (Chelsea), Ronaldinho (Barcelona), Emerson (Juventus), Van Persie (Arsenal); Shevchenko (Milan), Toni (Fiorentina), Eto'o (Barcelona)

DON BALON (Spa)
Abbiati (Juventus); Zambrotta (Juventus), Ferdinand (Man Utd), Cris (Lyon); Demichelis (Bayern Munich), Xavi (Barcelona), Lampard (Chelsea), Ronaldinho (Barcelona); Shevchenko (Milan), Eto'o (Barcelona), Toni (Fiorentina)

FOOT (Blg)
Coupet (Lyon); Sagnol (Bayern Munich), Cannavaro (Juventus), Lucio (Bayern Munich); Lampard (Chelsea), Pirlo (Milan), Demichelis (Bayern Munich), Luis Garcia (Liverpool); Eto'o (Barcelona), Shevchenko (Milan), Villa (Valencia)

KICKER (Ger)
Coupet (Lyon); Carragher (Liverpool), Puyol (Barcelona), Cannavaro (Juventus); Borowski (Werder Bremen), Lampard (Chelsea), Cambiasso (Inter), Ronaldinho (Barcelona); Eto'o (Barcelona), Toni (Fiorentina), Henry (Arsenal)

TIPS BLADET (Den)
Reina (Liverpool); Daniel Alves (Sevilla), Carragher (Liverpool), Ujfalusi (Fiorentina); Farfan (PSV), Pirlo (Milan), Xavi (Barcelona), Borowski (Werder Bremen), Ronaldinho (Barcelona); Trezeguet (Juventus), Eto'o (Barcelona)

WORLD SOCCER (UK)
Casillas (Real Madrid); Reveillere (Lyon), Cacapa (Lyon), Pernia (Getafe); Ribery (Marseille), Ronaldinho (Barcelona), Lampard (Chelsea), Messi (Barcelona); Toni (Fiorentina), Eto'o (Barcelona), Rooney (Man Utd)

YYePG Proudly Presents, Thx for Support

POLAND

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Wisla K	16	9	5	2	27	12	32
Legia	16	9	5	2	21	9	32
Korona	16	7	5	4	28	21	26
Amica	16	7	4	5	25	17	25
Zaglebie	16	7	4	5	28	22	25
Cracovia	16	7	3	6	20	23	24
Odra	16	6	5	5	15	14	23
Lech	16	6	5	5	25	26	23
Pogon	16	5	7	4	20	17	22
Groclin	16	5	4	7	21	25	19
Wisla P	16	5	3	8	16	27	18
Arka	16	3	8	5	13	15	17
Gornik Z	16	4	4	8	18	23	16
Belchatow	16	3	6	7	15	23	15
Gornik L	16	2	8	6	11	16	14
Polonia	16	3	4	9	11	24	13

PORTUGAL

Friday, November 18
Guimaraes 2 (Benachour 40, Paulo Sergio 56)
Gil Vicente 0

Saturday, November 19
FC Porto 5 (Gonzalez 10, 90, Lopez 19, 77, Cesar Peixoto 71)
Academica 1 (Marcel 90)

Sporting Braga 3 (Cesinha 68, Maxi Bevacqua 87, 90)
Benfica 2 (Anderson 21, Nuno Gomes pen 89)

Sunday, November 20
Boavista 2 (Joao Pinto 50, William Souza 71)
Uniao Leiria 0

Estrela Amadora 0
Pacos Ferreira 0

Naval 0
Setubal 3 (Pedro Oliveira 71, Fabio 77, 82)

Penafiel 0
Sporting Lisbon 1 (Liedson 59)

Rio Ave 0
Nacional 2 (Andre Pinto 65, Miguelito 89)

Monday, November 21
Belenenses 0
Maritimo 1 (Manduca pen 37)

Friday, November 25
Nacional 1 (Alonso 28)
Sporting Braga 0

Saturday, November 26
Maritimo 1 (Kanu 43)
Boavista 1 (Fary pen 49)

Sunday, November 27
Academica 1 (Marcel 76)
Estrela Amadora 0

Benfica 0
Belenenses 0

Pacos Ferreira 3 (Ronny 3, 63, Junior pen 50)
Naval 1 (Saulo 11)

Setubal 1 (Auri 89)
Rio Ave 0

Sporting Lisbon 2 (Deivid 52, Carlos Martins 62)
Guimaraes 0

Uniao Leiria 1 (Fabio Felicio 78)
Penafiel 1 (Bibishkov 88)

Monday, November 28
Gil Vicente 0
FC Porto 1 (Gonzalez 1)

Friday, December 2
FC Porto 1 (Anderson Polga og 65)
Sporting Lisbon 1 (Deivid 48)

Saturday, December 3
Belenenses 1 (Meyong 85)
Nacional 0

Maritimo 0
Benfica 1 (Mantorras 65)

Sunday, December 4
Boavista 2 (Diogo Valente 17, Joao Pinto 25)
Penafiel 1 (Odair 56)

Estrela Amadora 1 (Pedro Simoes 69)
Gil Vicente 0

Naval 0
Academica 1 (Hugo Alcantara 40)

Rio Ave 2 (Marquinhos 30, Gaucho 37)
Pacos Ferreira 2 (Didi 7, Junior 68)

Sporting Braga 0
Setubal 1 (Fabio 47)

Monday, December 5
Guimaraes 0
Uniao Leiria 3 (Toure 2, Paulo Cesar 6, 43)

PORTUGAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
FC Porto	13	8	4	1	20	8	28
Nacional	13	8	3	2	15	5	27
Setubal	13	8	2	3	11	3	26
Sporting Braga	13	8	2	3	13	6	26
Sporting Lisbon	13	7	3	3	18	15	24
Benfica	13	6	4	3	20	12	22
Boavista	13	5	7	1	20	12	22
Pacos Ferreira	13	5	3	5	16	17	18
Academica	13	5	2	6	12	16	17
Rio Ave	13	4	4	5	17	19	16
Uniao Leiria	13	4	3	6	15	16	15
Maritimo	13	3	6	4	14	15	15
Belenenses	13	4	2	7	14	16	14
E Amadora	13	3	4	6	9	13	13
Naval	13	3	2	8	13	21	11
Gil Vicente	13	3	2	8	9	17	11
Guimaraes	13	3	1	9	7	20	10
Penafiel	13	1	4	8	10	22	7

LEADING GOALSCORERS
10 Nuno Gomes (Benfica)
9 Meyong (Belenenses)
8 Marcel (Academica)

REPUBLIC OF IRELAND

REPUBLIC OF IRELAND – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Cork City	33	22	8	3	53	18	74
Derry City	33	22	6	5	56	25	72
Shelbourne	33	20	7	6	62	25	67
Drogheda Utd	33	12	12	9	40	33	48
Longford Town	33	12	9	12	29	32	45
Bohemians	33	13	6	14	42	47	45
Bray Wand'rs	33	11	6	16	40	57	39
Waterford Utd	33	9	7	17	30	49	34
UCD	33	7	12	14	28	44	33
St Patrick's	33	7	11	15	26	36	32
Shamrock Rvrs*	33	9	8	16	33	52	27
Finn Harps	33	5	6	22	30	51	21

**8pts deducted for financial irregularities in licence application*

Relegated: Shamrock Rovers (after play-off), Finn Harps
Promoted: Sligo Rovers, Dublin City (after play-off)

FAI CUP – Final

Dec 4 - Lansdowne Road, Dublin
Cork City 0
Drogheda United 2 (Whelan 52, O'Brien 83)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 24,521. **Ref:** Stokes

ROMANIA

Nov 19: Dinamo 1 Arges 2; Bacau 1 Jiul 2; Otelul 0 Poli Timisoara 2; Pandurii 1 National 1; Rapid 1 CFR Cluj 0.
Nov 20: Farul 3 Gloria 0; Poli Iasi 1 Vaslui 0; Steaua 4 Sportul 1.
Nov 25: Arges 3 Poli Iasi 0.
Nov 26: CFR Cluj 0 Gloria 0; Jiul 1 Steaua 2; Poli Timisoara 1 Pandurii 0; Vaslui 1 Bacau 1.
Nov 27: National 2 Dinamo 0; Otelul 0 Farul 1; Sportul 1 Rapid 0.
Dec 2: Pandurii 2 Otelul 2.
Dec 3: Farul 1 CFR Cluj 2; Bacau 3 Arges 2.
Dec 4: Dinamo 1 Poli Timisoara 0; Gloria 2 Sportul 0; Poli Iasi 2 National 3; Steaua 2 Vaslui 2.

ROMANIA

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Dinamo	15	10	2	3	36	13	32
Steaua	15	9	4	2	27	10	31
National	15	8	3	4	17	17	27
Poli Timisoara	15	7	5	3	19	9	26
CFR Cluj	15	7	5	3	19	12	26
Arges	15	7	4	4	19	14	25
Farul	15	7	2	6	21	20	23
Sportul	15	6	4	5	20	17	22
Rapid	14	6	4	4	16	14	22
Poli Iasi	15	6	2	7	12	16	20
Gloria	15	5	4	6	13	19	19
Pandurii	15	3	4	8	11	20	13
Jiul	14	2	6	6	10	17	12
Bacau	15	3	3	9	10	22	12
Otelul	15	1	6	8	9	25	9
Vaslui	15	0	6	9	7	21	6

RUSSIA

Nov 19: Tom 2 Terek 0; Saturn 1 FC Moscow 2; Shinnik 3 Rubin 2; Torpedo 2 Amkar 1; Zenit 4 Rostov 2; Kryliya Sovetov 0 Dinamo 1; CSKA 4 Alaniya 3; Lokomotiv 1 Spartak 1.

RUSSIA – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
CSKA	30	18	8	4	48	20	62
Spartak	30	16	8	6	47	26	56
Lokomotiv	30	14	14	2	41	18	56
Rubin	30	14	9	7	45	31	51
FC Moscow	30	14	8	8	36	26	50
Zenit	30	13	10	7	45	26	49
Torpedo	30	12	9	9	37	33	45
Dinamo	30	12	2	16	36	46	38
Shinnik	30	9	11	10	26	31	38
Tom	30	9	10	11	28	33	37
Saturn	30	8	9	13	23	25	33
Amkar	30	7	12	11	25	36	33
Rostov	30	8	7	15	26	41	31
Kryliya Sovetov	30	7	8	15	29	44	29
Alaniya	30	5	8	17	27	53	23
Terek*	30	5	5	20	20	50	14

**6pts deducted for non-payment of transfer fee*

Relegated: Alaniya, Terek
Promoted: Luch-Energiya Vladivostok, Spartak Nalchik

SCOTLAND

Saturday, November 19
Celtic 3 (Hartson 12, Balde 56, McGeady 61)
Rangers 0 Att: 58,997

Dundee Utd 1 (McIntyre 68)
Motherwell 1 (McDonald 71) Att: 6,305

Dunfermline 0
Livingston 1 (Dalglish 61) Att: 6,016

Hibernian 2 (Riordan 1, 33)
Falkirk 3 (Duffy 48, 73, Gow 55) Att: 13,092

Kilmarnock 2 (Boyd 54, Naismith 56)
Inverness 2 (Bayne 30, Dargo 77) Att: 4,708

Sunday, November 20
Aberdeen 1 (Smith 13)
Hearts 1 (Skacel 64) Att: 14,901

Saturday, November 26
Celtic 0
Dunfermline 1 (Ross 16) Att: 58,203

Falkirk 1 (McBreen 82)
Aberdeen 2 (Ireland og 45, Anderson 51) Att: 5,826

Inverness 1 (Tokely 20)
Dundee Utd 1 (Miller pen 7) Att: 3,239

Livingston 0
Kilmarnock 3 (Boyd 26, 81, Naismith 29) Att: 3,446

Motherwell 1 (McLean 39)
Hearts 1 (Hartley pen 90) Att: 8,131

Sunday, November 27
Hibernian 2 (Riordan 18, O'Connor 25)
Rangers 1 (Ferguson 59) Att: 16,958

Saturday, December 3
Dundee Utd 1 (Samuel 61)
Hibernian 0 Att: 7,976

Dunfermline 0
Kilmarnock 1 (Boyd 41) Att: 4,319

Hearts 2 (Skacel 8, 15)
Livingston 1 (Walker 63) Att: 16,583

Motherwell 0
Inverness 2 (Dargo 63, 88) Att: 4,103

Rangers 2 (Ireland og 31, Lovenkrands pen 56)
Falkirk 2 (Gow 69, Moutinho 71) Att: 48,042

Sunday, December 4
Aberdeen 1 (Winter 53)
Celtic 3 (McGeady 56, Petrov 58, Telfer 64) Att: 17,031

SCOTLAND

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Celtic	17	13	2	2	44	14	41
Hearts	17	12	4	1	34	12	40
Hibernian	17	11	1	5	30	19	34
Kilmarnock	17	7	5	5	31	26	26
Rangers	17	6	6	5	26	20	24
Inverness	17	5	7	5	20	20	22
Aberdeen	17	5	6	6	21	22	21
Motherwell	17	5	5	7	29	34	20
Dundee Utd	17	4	6	7	19	27	18
Falkirk	17	4	5	8	19	32	17
Dunfermline	17	2	2	13	10	31	8
Livingston	17	1	5	11	9	35	8

LEADING GOALSCORERS
13 Kris Boyd (Kilmarnock)
13 Rudolf Skacel (Hearts)
9 John Hartson (Celtic)

SERBIA & MONTENEGRO

Nov 19: Borac 0 Habitfarm 0; Buducnost BD 2 Smederevo 0; Hajduk K 0 Vojvodina 0; Obilic 0 Buducnost P 0; Vozdovac 0 OFK 1; Zeta 3 Jedinstvo BP 0.
Nov 20: Red Star 2 Zemun 1; Rad 1 Partizan 2.
Nov 26: Habitfarm 4 Buducnost BD 2; Jedinstvo BP 0 Buducnost P 1; OFK 1 Borac 1; Partizan 4 Obilic 2; Smederevo 0 Rad 1; Zemun 2 Vozdovac 2; Zeta 5 Hajduk K 3.
Nov 27: Vojvodina 1 Red Star 0.
Dec 3: Borac 2 Zemun 0; Buducnost BD 1 OFK 0; Buducnost P 0 Partizan 1; Hajduk K 2 Jedinstvo BP 0; Obilic 0 Smederevo 2; Vozdovac 2 Vojvodina 0.
Dec 4: Red Star 3 Zeta 2; Rad 1 Habitfarm 0.
Dec 7: Vozdovac 1 Zeta 0; Jedinstvo BP 2 Partizan 3.

SERBIA & MONTENEGRO

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Red Star	15	12	1	2	38	16	37
Partizan	16	12	1	3	29	13	37
Vozdovac	16	10	3	3	32	16	33
Zeta	16	9	1	6	24	22	28
OFK	15	8	1	6	17	9	25
Vojvodina	15	7	4	4	14	11	25
Hajduk K	15	6	6	3	19	15	24
Zemun	15	5	4	6	17	19	19
Buducnost BD	15	6	1	8	12	19	19
Borac	15	4	5	6	14	18	17
Smederevo	15	5	2	8	14	20	17
Rad	15	5	1	9	16	20	16
Buducnost P	15	3	6	6	13	19	15
Habitfarm	15	3	4	8	9	15	13
Jedinstvo BP	16	3	1	12	12	33	10
Obilic	15	2	3	10	13	28	9

SPAIN

Saturday, November 19
Getafe 0
Osasuna 0 Att: 13,000

Real Madrid 0
Barcelona 3 (Eto'o 15, Ronaldinho 59, 77) Att: 78,000

Sevilla 1 (Maresca pen 50)
Betis 0 Att: 45,000

Villarreal 0
Zaragoza 0 Att: 19,000

YYePG Proudly Presents, Thx for Support

Sunday, November 20
Athletic Bilbao 0
Alaves 2 (Nene 7, Bodipo 90) Att: 39,000

Cadiz 0
Valencia 1 (Vicente 81) Att: 19,000

Celta Vigo 2 (Fernando Baiano 26, Canobbio 53)
Atletico Madrid 1 (Antonio Lopez 60) Att: 17,000

Espanyol 2 (Tamudo pen 40, Luis Garcia 42)
Mallorca 0 Att: 20,300

Malaga 3 (Cesar Navas 61, Antonio Hidalgo 74, Edgar 76)
Real Sociedad 1 (De Paula 79) Att: 18,000

Racing Santander 0
Deportivo La Coruna 3 (Neru og 17, Moraton og 52, Taborda 73) Att: 12,754

Saturday, November 26
Mallorca 0
Athletic Bilbao 1 (Luis Prieto 56) Att: 14,000

Valencia 2 (Villa 72, Fabio Aurelio 79)
Celta Vigo 0 Att: 40,000

Sunday, November 27
Atletico Madrid 1 (Luccin 9)
Espanyol 1 (Jarque 11) Att: 35,000

Barcelona 4 (Eto'o 31, Messi 52, Ronaldinho pen 57, Silvinho 66)
Racing Santander 1 (Javi Casquero pen 71) Att: 57,200

Betis 1 (Marcos Assuncao 7)
Cadiz 1 (Manolo Perez 72) Att: 40,000

Deportivo La Coruna 0
Villarreal 2 (Riquelme 56, Sorin 78) Att: 15,000

Getafe 3 (Paunovic 27, 85, Cesar Navas og 39)
Malaga 2 (Nacho Perez 25, Juan Rodriguez 52) Att: 14,000

Osasuna 3 (Milosevic 59, Punal pen 72, Moha 84)
Alaves 2 (Nene 56, Aloisi 90) Att: 15,903

Real Sociedad 2 (Xabier Prieto pen 44, De Paula 59)
Real Madrid 2 (Raul Bravo 87, Zidane 88) Att: 23,393

Zaragoza 0
Sevilla 2 (Saviola 57, Daniel Alves 90) Att: 32,000

Saturday, December 3
Athletic Bilbao 1 (Orbaiz 90)
Atletico Madrid 1 (Kezman 12) Att: 40,000

Celta Vigo 2 (Canobbio 6, Fernando Baiano 20)
Betis 1 (Edu 90) Att: 14,000

Real Madrid 1 (Ronaldo 17)
Getafe 0 Att: 72,204

Sunday, December 4
Alaves 0
Mallorca 3 (Victor 45, 52, Iuliano 65) Att: 12,117

Cadiz 1 (Enrique 16)
Zaragoza 2 (Cani 68, Ewerthon 69) Att: 18,500

Espanyol 1 (Corominas 63)
Valencia 3 (Angulo 15, Villa 43, Aimar 60) Att: 21,220

Malaga 1 (Nacho Perez 37)
Osasuna 2 (Webo 23, Valdo 40) Att: 21,000

Racing Santander 2 (Antonito 68, Riesgo og 87)
Real Sociedad 2 (Novo 21, De Paula 50) Att: 12,860

Sevilla 0
Deportivo La Coruna 2 (Diego Tristan pen 26, Victor 41) Att: 35,000

Villarreal 0
Barcelona 2 (Pena og 24, Deco 63) Att: 23,000

SPAIN

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Barcelona	14	9	4	1	36	12	31
Osasuna	14	10	1	3	21	14	31
Celta Vigo	14	8	2	4	18	15	26
Real Madrid	14	8	1	5	25	16	25
Valencia	14	7	4	3	21	16	25
Villarreal	14	6	5	3	20	14	23
Dep La Coruna	14	6	5	3	19	14	23
Sevilla	14	6	5	3	13	8	23
Getafe	14	6	3	5	20	19	21
Real Sociedad	14	5	3	6	21	28	18
Atletico Madrid	14	4	5	5	14	14	17
Malaga	14	4	3	7	21	20	15
Mallorca	14	4	3	7	14	22	15
Zaragoza	14	2	8	4	14	18	14
Cadiz	14	3	5	6	10	15	14
Espanyol	14	3	4	7	11	18	13
R Santander	14	2	6	6	9	17	12
Athletic Bilbao	14	2	5	7	13	21	11
Alaves	14	2	5	7	13	22	11
Betis	14	2	5	7	10	20	11

LEADING GOALSCORERS
12 Samuel Eto'o (Barcelona)
9 Ronaldinho (Barcelona)
9 David Villa (Valencia)
8 Ronaldo (Real Madrid)

SWITZERLAND

Nov 18: Thun 2 Neuchatel Xamax 3.
Nov 20: Aarau 0 Basle 2; Schaffhausen 1 Yverdon 2; St Gallen 1 Grasshopper 1; Zurich 1 Young Boys 1.
Nov 26: Grasshopper 1 Aarau 1; Young Boys 1 St Gallen 0.
Nov 27: Schaffhausen 0 Zurich 2; Thun 3 Yverdon 0.
Dec 2: Thun 1 Young Boys 1.
Dec 4: Basle 1 Grasshopper 0; St Gallen 7 Neuchatel Xamax 1; Zurich 1 Yverdon 1; Aarau 0 Schaffhausen 2.
Dec 7: Neuchatel Xamax 3 Basle 2.

SWITZERLAND

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Basle	17	12	3	2	41	21	39
Zurich	17	9	4	4	42	24	31
Grasshopper	17	8	5	4	27	18	29
Young Boys	17	7	7	3	25	18	28
Thun	17	7	3	7	30	30	24
St Gallen	17	6	4	7	29	27	22
Yverdon	17	5	3	9	23	30	18
Aarau	17	4	4	9	14	30	16
Neuchatel X	17	5	1	11	24	41	16
Schaffhausen	17	3	4	10	12	28	13

TURKEY

Nov 19: Diyarbakirspor 3 Trabzonspor 0; Fenerbahce 2 Manisaspor 1; Genclerbirligi 3 Erciyesspor 0; Samsunspor 1 Denizlispor 2.
Nov 20: Ankaraspor 1 Sivasspor 1; Besiktas 0 Gaziantepspor 1; Kayserispor 2 Malatyaspor 0; Konyaspor 2 Ankaragucu 0; Rizespor 0 Galatasaray 3.
Nov 25: Trabzonspor 3 Rizespor 1.
Nov 26: Malatyaspor 1 Konyaspor 0; Sivasspor 1 Besiktas 3; Manisaspor 1 Ankaraspor 0.
Nov 27: Ankaragucu 1 Samsunspor 1; Denizlispor 0 Genclerbirligi 2; Erciyesspor 0 Diyarbakirspor 2; Galatasaray 0 Fenerbahce 1; Gaziantepspor 1 Kayserispor 4.
Dec 2: Fenerbahce 2 Trabzonspor 2.
Dec 3: Ankaraspor 1 Galatasaray 2; Konyaspor 3 Gaziantepspor 2; Rizespor 2 Erciyesspor 2.
Dec 4: Besiktas 3 Manisaspor 1; Diyarbakirspor 1 Denizlispor 0; Genclerbirligi 0 Samsunspor 1; Kayserispor 2 Sivasspor 2.
Dec 5: Malatyaspor 0 Ankaragucu 0.

TURKEY

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Fenerbahce	15	12	3	0	34	15	39
Galatasaray	15	11	2	2	33	14	35
Kayserispor	15	9	2	4	29	18	29
Besiktas	15	7	4	4	22	15	25
Sivasspor	15	6	5	4	18	16	23
Erciyesspor	15	5	7	3	16	15	22
Genclerbirligi	15	5	6	4	16	11	21
Konyaspor	15	5	5	5	20	16	20
Gaziantepspor	15	5	5	5	21	24	20
Trabzonspor	15	5	5	5	18	21	20
Ankaragucu	15	4	5	6	18	20	17
Diyarbakirspor	15	5	2	8	16	26	17
Manisaspor	15	4	4	7	19	22	16
Rizespor	15	3	5	7	12	20	14
Ankaraspor	15	2	7	6	18	21	13
Samsunspor	15	3	4	8	26	35	13
Malatyaspor	15	2	5	8	10	26	11
Denizlispor	15	2	4	9	8	19	10

UKRAINE

Nov 19: Tavriya 0 Dnipro 1.
Nov 20: Shakhtar 2 Volyn 0; Kryvbas 3 FC Kharkiv 1; Metalurh Z 1 Dynamo 2; Arsenal 0 Chornomorets 1; Stal 1 Metalurh D 1; Zakarpattya 1 Vorskla 1; Metalist 1 Illichivets 1.
Nov 27: Kryvbas 2 Metalist 1; Metalurh D 1 Zakarpattya 0; Chornomorets 2 Stal 2; Dynamo 3 Arsenal 1; Volyn 0 Metalurh Z 1; Dnipro 2 Shakhtar 2; FC Kharkiv 0 Tavriya 0; Vorskla 1 Illichivets 0.
Dec 4: Tavriya 1 Kryvbas 0; Arsenal 2 Volyn 1; Stal 1 Dynamo 2; Zakarpattya 2 Chornomorets 1; Illichivets 1 Metalurh D 0; Metalist 0 Vorskla 1.
Dec 5: Shakhtar 3 FC Kharkiv 0; Metalurh Z 1 Dnipro 0.
Dec 7: Dynamo 4 Zakarpattya 1.
Dec 8: Metalurh D 2 Vorskla 0; Chornomorets 1 Illichivets 2.

UKRAINE

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Dynamo	19	16	3	0	46	11	51
Shakhtar	18	14	3	1	40	8	45
Illichivets	19	9	5	5	20	19	32
Metalurh D	19	8	7	4	25	13	31
Chornomorets	19	8	4	7	25	19	28
Volyn	18	8	2	8	25	31	26
Metalist	18	7	3	8	23	27	24
Vorskla	19	6	5	8	17	24	23
FC Kharkiv	18	6	4	8	23	25	22
Kryvbas	18	5	5	8	15	18	20
Dnipro	18	5	5	8	16	20	20
Metalurh Z	18	5	4	9	18	27	19
Stal	18	4	7	7	15	26	19
Tavriya	18	5	3	10	13	22	18
Arsenal	18	4	5	9	15	26	17
Zakarpattya	19	2	5	12	11	31	11

SOUTH AMERICA

SUDAMERICANA CUP

Semi-finals, 1st legs

Nov 23
Boca Juniors (Arg) 2 (Insua 71, Palermo 84)
Universidad Catolica (Chl) 2 (Imboden 75, J Quinteros 79)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 40,000. **Ref:** Ruiz (Col)

Nov 23
Velez Sarsfield (Arg) 0
Pumas UNAM (Mex) 0
Att: 22,000. **Ref:** Fagundes (Bra)

Semi-finals, 2nd legs

Nov 30
Pumas UNAM 4 (Palacios 18, Marioni 51, 77, 88)
Velez Sarsfield 0
HT: 1-0. **Ref:** Larrionda (Uru)
Sent off: Cubero (Velez) 38min
Pumas UNAM 4-0 on agg

Dec 1
Universidad Catolica 0
Boca Juniors 1 (Schiavi 60)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 18,000. **Ref:** Simon (Bra)
Boca Juniors 3-2 on agg

Final, 1st leg

Dec 6
Pumas UNAM 1 (Botero 53)
Boca Juniors 1 (Palacio 30)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 65,000. **Ref:** Larrionda (Uru)
Pumas: Bernal - Beltran, Veron, Pineda, Castro, Galindo, Palacios, Augusto, Ailton (Botero 46), De Nigris (Iniguez 46), Marioni.
Boca: Abbondanzieri - Schiavi, Diaz, Ibarra, Krupoviesa, Gago, Ledesma, Bilos (Cardozo 76), Insua (Silvestre 87), Palacio, Palermo (Delgado 86).

2nd leg – December 18

ARGENTINA

OPENING CHAMPIONSHIP

Saturday, November 19
Gimnasia J 1 (Silva 82)
Independiente 1 (Eluchans 27)

Instituto 0
Banfield 0

Sunday, November 20
Argentinos Juniors 1 (Pisculichi 59)
River Plate 0

Boca Juniors 2 (Insua 58, 87)
Velez Sarsfield 0

Gimnasia LP 1 (Lobos pen 90)
Tiro Federal 1 (Campora 79)

Lanus 3 (Fabbiani 16, Aguirre 55, Valeri 71)
Colon Santa Fe 1 (Vargas 74)

Olimpo 3 (Blanco 50, 90, Solana 87)
Estudiantes 0

Racing Club 4 (Romero 9, Capria pen 21, Villanueva 47, 90)
Quilmes 1 (Risso 77)

Rosario Central 1 (Ruben 85)
Arsenal 1 (Caffa 70)

Monday, November 21
San Lorenzo 4 (Montillo 31, Cardozo 36, 45, Herrera 89)
Newell's Old Boys 2 (Vella 5, Silva 86)

Friday, November 25
Banfield 5 (Mendoza 42, Paletta 45, Sand pen 63, Cvitanich 77, 85)
San Lorenzo 0

Saturday, November 26
Arsenal 1 (S Gonzalez 19)
Lanus 2 (Fabbiani 31, 52)

Colon Santa Fe 1 (Fuertes pen 31)
Instituto 1 (Castro 28)

Tiro Federal 1 (Campora 26)
Racing Club 2 (Villanueva 47, Grabinski 50)

Velez Sarsfield 0
Rosario Central 2 (Ruben 15, 40)

Sunday, November 27
Estudiantes 1 (Bastia 39)
Boca Juniors 3 (Ledesma 2, Palacio 41, Barros Schelotto 79)

Independiente 4 (Pusineri 3, Dominguez 5, Aguero pen 45, Bustos Montoya 70)
Olimpo 0

Newell's Old Boys 3 (Lucero 25, 41, Colace 55)
Argentinos Juniors 0

Quilmes 2 (Caneo 57, 90)
Gimnasia J 2 (Quinteros 44, 45)

River Plate 1 (Fernandez 82)
Gimnasia LP 3 (Lobos 23, Vargas 39, 50)

Friday, December 2
Argentinos Juniors 1 (Machin 38)
Banfield 1 (Cvitanich 32)

Saturday, December 3
Quilmes 1 (Choy 37)
Tiro Federal 2 (Campora 4, Tilger 90)

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Rosario Central 1 (Rivarola 41)
Estudiantes 1 (Ortiz 39)

San Lorenzo 1 (Lussenhoff og 81)
Colon Santa Fe 4 (Moreno y Fabianesi 6, 62, Fuertes 27, Lussenhoff 58)

Sunday, December 4
Gimnasia J 2 (Oyola 34, 69)
Olimpo 1 (Diaz 80)

Instituto 0
Arsenal 2 (P Gonzalez 10, S Gonzalez 24)

Lanus 0
Velez Sarsfield 4 (Bossio og 1, Broggi 25, Ocampo 68, Francou 70)

Racing Club 1 (Villanueva 61)
River Plate 1 (Farias 7)

ARGENTINA – OPENING

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Gimnasia LP	17	11	2	4	27	18	35
Boca Juniors	17	10	4	3	32	16	34
Velez Sarsfield	18	10	2	6	24	14	32
Independiente	17	8	7	2	32	18	31
Argentinos Jnrs	18	8	4	6	19	18	28
Banfield	18	5	12	1	24	14	27
River Plate	18	8	3	7	30	21	27
Estudiantes	18	8	3	7	21	20	27
San Lorenzo	18	7	4	7	31	38	25
Colon Santa Fe	18	6	5	7	26	27	23
Olimpo	18	5	8	5	18	21	23
Racing Club	18	6	4	8	27	27	22
Arsenal	18	5	7	6	22	22	22
Lanus	18	5	7	6	19	29	22
Rosario Central	18	5	6	7	18	27	21
Newell's OB	17	5	4	8	25	26	19
Quilmes	18	4	6	8	19	26	18
Gimnasia J	18	3	8	7	23	30	17
Tiro Federal	18	4	2	12	22	31	14
Instituto	18	2	8	8	9	25	14

LEADING GOALSCORERS
13 Javier Campora (Tiro Federal)
10 Rodrigo Palacio (Boca Juniors)
10 Leonardo Pisculichi (Argentinos Juniors)
10 Gonzalo Vargas (Gimnasia LP)

BOLIVIA

OPENING CHAMPIONSHIP
Play-offs

Nov 19: The Strongest 3 San Jose 2.
Nov 20: La Paz 1 Bolivar 2; Blooming 1 Oriente 0.
Nov 23: Bolivar 4 Blooming 2; Oriente 1 The Strongest 1.
Nov 24: La Paz 1 San Jose 1.
Nov 27: Blooming 2 La Paz 1; The Strongest 1 Bolivar 3; San Jose 5 Oriente 1.
Nov 30: La Paz 1 The Strongest 1; Blooming 2 San Jose 1.
Dec 1: Bolivar 3 Oriente 1.
Dec 4: Bolivar 4 La Paz 3; San Jose 0 The Strongest 1; Oriente 3 Blooming 1.
Dec 7: San Jose 0 La Paz 0; The Strongest 1 Oriente 0.
Dec 8: Blooming 4 Bolivar 2.

OPENING PLAY-OFFS

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Bolivar	8	5	1	2	20	15	16
Blooming	8	5	1	2	17	13	16
The Strongest	8	3	2	3	10	13	11
La Paz	8	2	3	3	12	12	9
San Jose	8	1	4	3	11	10	7
Oriente	8	2	1	5	9	16	7

BRAZIL

Nov 19: Sao Paulo 4 Figueirense 2; Juventude 2 Goias 1; Brasiliense 1 Santos 0.
Nov 20: Parana 0 Flamengo 1; Ponte Preta 2 Palmeiras 6; Fortaleza 5 Fluminense 1; Vasco da Gama 4 Paysandu 0; Atletico Paranaense 2 Sao Caetano 2; Botafogo 2 Cruzeiro 1; Atletico Mineiro 1 Coritiba 0; Corinthians 1 Internacional 1.
Nov 27: Santos 2 Botafogo 1; Internacional 2 Palmeiras 1; Parana 2 Cruzeiro 0; Sao Caetano 1 Coritiba 1; Fortaleza 1 Sao Paulo 0; Flamengo 0 Goias 0; Atletico Paranaense 3 Paysandu 2; Fluminense 1 Juventude 2; Atletico Mineiro 0 Vasco da Gama 0; Corinthians 3 Ponte Preta 1; Brasiliense 0 Figueirense 2.
Dec 4: Sao Paulo 3 Atletico Paranaense 1; Juventude 1 Atletico Mineiro 3; Figueirense 3 Santos 1; Ponte Preta 3 Brasiliense 1; Paysandu 1 Flamengo 4; Vasco da Gama 3 Parana 1; Coritiba 1 Internacional 0; Botafogo 2 Fortaleza 0; Cruzeiro 1 Sao Caetano 3; Palmeiras 3 Fluminense 2; Goias 3 Corinthians 2.

BRAZIL – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Corinthians	42	24	9	9	87	59	81
Internacional	42	23	9	10	72	49	78
Goias	42	22	8	12	68	51	74
Palmeiras	42	20	10	12	81	65	70
Fluminense	42	19	11	12	79	70	68
At Paranaense	42	18	7	17	76	67	61
Parana	42	17	10	15	59	51	61
Cruzeiro	42	17	9	16	73	72	60
Botafogo	42	17	8	17	57	56	59
Santos	42	16	11	15	68	71	59
Sao Paulo	42	16	10	16	77	67	58
Vasco da Gama	42	15	11	16	74	84	56
Fortaleza	42	16	7	19	58	64	55
Juventude	42	15	10	17	66	72	55
Flamengo	42	14	13	15	56	60	55
Figueirense	42	14	11	17	65	72	53
Sao Caetano	42	14	10	18	54	60	52
Ponte Preta	42	15	6	21	63	80	51
Coritiba	42	13	10	19	51	60	49
At Mineiro	42	13	8	21	54	59	47
Paysandu	42	12	5	25	63	92	41
Brasiliense	42	10	11	21	47	67	41

Relegated: Coritiba, Atletico Mineiro, Paysandu, Brasiliense
Promoted: Gremio, Santa Cruz

CHILE

CLOSING CHAMPIONSHIP
Regular season

Nov 18: U Catolica 3 Dep La Serena 0.
Nov 19: Cobreloa 2 Huachipato 1; Dep Concepcion 3 Dep Temuco 1; Puerto Montt 0 Everton 1; Santiago Wanderers 3 San Felipe 1; Cobresal 2 Rangers 0.
Nov 20: Dep Melipilla 2 Colo Colo 3; Palestino 1 U de Concepcion 2; Audax Italiano 4 Union Espanola 5; U de Chile 3 Coquimbo Unido 0.

CHILE – CLOSING – GROUP 1 – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
U Catolica	19	15	4	0	33	3	49
Huachipato	19	10	4	5	31	20	34
Dep Concepcion	19	9	6	4	28	24	33
San Felipe	19	6	5	8	24	33	23
Puerto Montt	19	5	3	11	17	31	18

GROUP 2 – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
U de Chile	19	11	5	3	34	24	38
Dep La Serena	19	6	6	7	24	24	24
Everton	19	5	8	6	23	22	23
S Wanderers	19	6	5	8	17	23	23
Dep Temuco	19	6	1	12	17	39	19

GROUP 3 – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Cobresal	19	8	4	7	30	24	28
Cobreloa	19	6	5	8	23	21	23
Palestino	19	4	8	7	24	28	20
Audax Italiano	19	4	6	9	24	32	18
Rangers	19	4	6	9	24	32	18

GROUP 4 – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Colo Colo	19	13	5	1	47	17	44
U Concepcion	19	8	3	8	27	28	27
Union Espanola	19	6	6	7	30	34	24
Dep Melipilla	19	6	2	11	17	23	20
Coquimbo U'do	19	3	6	10	18	30	15

Group winners and the three runners-up with most points qualified for play-offs; the runner-up with fewest points met the third-placed side with most points in the qualifying play-off

Qualifying play-off
Nov 23: Cobreloa 5 Dep Concepcion 0.

Quarter-finals, 1st legs
Nov 25: Dep La Serena 1 Colo Colo 1.
Nov 26: Cobresal 2 Huachipato 1.
Nov 27: U de Concepcion 1 U de Chile 2; Cobreloa 1 U Catolica 1.

Quarter-finals, 2nd legs
Dec 3: Colo Colo 3 Dep La Serena 3 *Agg 4-4. Dep La Serena 4-1 on pens*; Huachipato 1 Cobresal 1 *Cobresal 3-2 on agg.*
Dec 4: U Catolica 2 Cobreloa 1 *U Catolica 3-2 on agg*; U de Chile 0 U de Concepcion 0 *U de Chile 2-1 on agg.*

COLOMBIA

CLOSING CHAMPIONSHIP
Play-offs

Nov 19: Indep Medellin 0 Indep Santa Fe 2.
Nov 20: Dep Cali 2 At Junior 0; Once Caldas 2 America 1; Pereira 1 Real Cartagena 0.
Nov 26: At Junior 3 Dep Cali 2.
Nov 27: America 3 Once Caldas 2; Real Cartagena 3 Pereira 2; Indep Santa Fe 1 Indep Medellin 1.
Dec 4: America 2 Dep Cali 2; Once Caldas 2 At Junior 0; Indep Santa Fe 2 Pereira 1; Indep Medellin 2 Cartagena 0.

CLOSING PLAY-OFFS – GROUP A

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Dep Cali	5	2	2	1	7	5	8
At Junior	5	2	1	2	5	7	7
Once Caldas	5	2	0	3	6	6	6
America	5	1	3	1	7	7	6

GROUP B

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Indep Santa Fe	5	2	2	1	6	4	8
Indep Medellin	5	2	1	2	5	5	7
Real Cartagena	5	2	1	2	5	6	7
Pereira	5	2	0	3	6	7	6

ECUADOR

CLOSING CHAMPIONSHIP
Play-offs

Nov 20: LDU Quito 4 Barcelona 1; El Nacional 5 Aucas 1; Olmedo 0 Dep Cuenca 1.
Nov 23: Dep Cuenca 2 Aucas 1; El Nacional 2 LDU Quito 3; Barcelona 0 Olmedo 1.
Nov 27: Dep Cuenca 2 Barcelona 0; Olmedo 0 El Nacional 2; Aucas 3 LDU Quito 1.
Nov 30: Barcelona 2 Aucas 1; LDU Quito 5 Olmedo 1; El Nacional 2 Dep Cuenca 0.
Dec 4: Aucas 1 Barcelona 2; Olmedo 1 LDU Quito 0; Dep Cuenca 2 El Nacional 1.

CLOSING PLAY-OFFS

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
El Nacional*	6	3	1	2	12	6	13
Dep Cuenca	6	4	1	1	7	4	13
LDU Quito	6	3	1	2	13	8	10
Olmedo*	6	2	1	3	4	9	8
Barcelona	6	2	1	3	5	9	7
Aucas*	6	1	1	4	8	13	6

**El Nacional, Aucas and Olmedo received 3, 2 and 1 bonus points respectively for finishing 1st, 2nd and 3rd in regular season*

PARAGUAY

CLOSING CHAMPIONSHIP

Nov 19: 3 de Febrero 3 General Caballero 1; Cerro Porteno 2 Tacuary 0; Guarani 0 Sportivo Luqueno 3.
Nov 20: Libertad 1 Olimpia 1; 12 de Octubre 2 Nacional 4.
Nov 26: Tacuary 1 Guarani 0; Olimpia 3 12 de Octubre 1; General Caballero 2 Libertad 1.
Nov 27: Sportivo Luqueno 1 3 de Febrero 1; Nacional 0 Cerro Porteno 1.
Dec 3: 3 de Febrero 4 Libertad 0; 12 de Octubre 2 General Caballero 0; Guarani 3 Nacional 2; Sportivo Luqueno 4 Tacuary 1.
Dec 4: Olimpia 1 Cerro Porteno 3.

PARAGUAY – CLOSING

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Cerro Porteno	17	10	3	4	31	19	33
Olimpia	17	9	4	4	29	18	31
3 de Febrero	17	8	4	5	28	19	28
Libertad	17	7	5	5	26	22	26
Sp Luqueno	17	6	7	4	26	24	25
Nacional	17	6	6	5	22	19	24
Tacuary	17	5	6	6	20	28	21
Guarani	17	5	2	10	16	25	17
12 de Octubre	17	2	8	7	17	29	14
Gen Caballero	17	4	1	12	14	26	13

PERU

CLOSING CHAMPIONSHIP

Nov 19: Melgar 1 Universitario 1; Universidad CV 2 Sport Ancash 2.
Nov 20: Union Huaral 0 Alianza Atletico 2; Cienciano 3 Sporting Cristal 0; Coronel Bolognesi 2 Sport Boys 2; Alianza Lima 3 At Universidad 3.
Nov 26: Sport Boys 3 Universidad CV 2.
Nov 27: Universitario 2 Alianza Lima 1; At Universidad 2 Coronel Bolognesi 3; Sport Ancash 0 Universidad SMP 1; Sporting Cristal 2 Union Huaral 0; Alianza Atletico 1 Melgar 0.
Dec 3: Coronel Bolognesi 0 Universitario 2; Alianza Lima 4 Alianza Atletico 1; Universidad CV 3 At Universidad 0.
Dec 4: Melgar 0 Sporting Cristal 2; Union Huaral 0 Cienciano 0; Universidad SMP 1 Sport Boys 0.
Dec 7: Sporting Cristal 0 Alianza Lima 0; Alianza Atletico 1 Coronel Bolognesi 2; Universitario 2 Universidad CV 2; At Universidad 3 Universidad SMP 1; Sport Boys 2 Sport Ancash 0; Cienciano 4 Melgar 0.

PERU – CLOSING

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Sporting Cristal	21	14	6	1	34	10	48
C Bolognesi	21	13	1	7	34	28	40
Univ SMP	21	11	6	4	34	19	39
Universitario	21	10	6	5	30	19	36
Cienciano	21	9	5	7	32	26	32
Melgar	22	8	5	9	23	35	29
At Universidad	22	8	4	10	31	36	28
Sport Boys	22	7	6	9	23	28	27
Alianza Atletico	21	8	3	10	25	32	27
Sport Ancash	21	7	5	9	23	29	26
Univ CV	21	5	5	11	27	34	20
Alianza Lima	21	4	5	12	21	23	17
Union Huaral	21	4	3	14	13	31	15

URUGUAY

OPENING CHAMPIONSHIP

Nov 19: Rocha 3 Wanderers 1; Rampla Juniors 2 Rentistas 0; Cerrito 1 Dep Colonia 1; River Plate 0 Danubio 3.
Nov 20: Fenix 2 Miramar Misiones 0; Plaza 3 Penarol 0; Cerro 1 Tacuarembo 0; Defensor 2 Paysandu 0; Nacional 0 Liverpool 0.
Nov 26: Rocha 3 Fenix 1; Defensor 1 Miramar Misiones 0.
Nov 27: Wanderers 1 Rampla Juniors 3; Plaza 1 Rentistas 0; Tacuarembo 0 Dep Colonia 1; Cerro 1 Cerrito 1; Paysandu 2 River Plate 3; Liverpool 1 Danubio 2; Penarol 0 Nacional 0.
Dec 3: Fenix 2 Plaza 0; Rampla Juniors 4 Tacuarembo 1; Dep Colonia 0 Cerro 1; Penarol 0 Cerrito 0.
Dec 4: Miramar Misiones 3 Rocha 3; Rentistas 2 Wanderers 2; Danubio 3 Paysandu 3; Liverpool 2 River Plate 1; Nacional 2 Defensor 2.
Dec 7: Wanderers 1 Penarol 1; Rocha 2 Rampla Juniors 1; Rentistas 3 Fenix 2; River Plate 1 Plaza 2; Cerrito 3 Paysandu 1; Dep Colonia 0 Liverpool 0; Defensor 4 Cerro 3; Miramar Misiones 1 Nacional 1.

URUGUAY – OPENING

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Rocha	16	10	2	4	33	21	32
Nacional*	16	8	7	1	28	13	28
Danubio	15	7	3	5	30	19	24
Penarol	16	6	6	4	18	22	24
Rampla Jnrs	16	7	2	7	32	24	23
River Plate	16	6	5	5	22	20	23
Dep Colonia	16	5	8	3	18	18	23
Rentistas	16	7	2	7	19	20	23
Liverpool	16	5	7	4	19	17	22
Cerrito	16	5	7	4	19	18	22
Defensor	16	5	6	5	19	19	21
Cerro	16	5	6	5	21	23	21
Plaza	16	5	5	6	15	23	20
M Misiones	16	3	8	5	18	18	17
Tacuarembo	15	4	5	6	10	15	17
Wanderers	16	3	8	5	24	31	17
Fenix	16	3	4	9	21	28	13
Paysandu	16	1	5	10	17	34	8

**3pts deducted for crowd trouble during home game against Penarol in the 2004 closing championship*

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VENEZUELA

OPENING CHAMPIONSHIP

Nov 20: Caracas 4 Aragua 1; ItalMaracaibo 2 Monagas 3; Carabobo 2 Trujillanos 1; Estudiantes 0 UA Maracaibo 1; Mineros Guayana 2 Dep Tachira 1.
Nov 27: Aragua 0 Dep Tachira 3; UA Maracaibo 2 Mineros Guayana 1; Trujillanos 2 Estudiantes 1; Monagas 0 Carabobo 2; Caracas 1 ItalMaracaibo 1.
Dec 1: Dep Tachira 0 UA Maracaibo 1; ItalMaracaibo 1 Aragua 1; Carabobo 1 Caracas 3; Estudiantes 2 Monagas 2; Mineros Guayana 3 Trujillanos 0.

VENEZUELA – OPENING

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
UA Maracaibo	16	11	4	1	24	11	37
Dep Tachira	16	9	2	5	30	21	29
Carabobo	16	6	5	5	23	22	23
Caracas	16	6	3	7	26	23	21
Mineros G'ana	16	5	6	5	20	19	21
Aragua	16	6	3	7	16	24	21
ItalMaracaibo	16	5	5	6	18	19	20
Trujillanos	16	4	5	7	13	19	17
Estudiantes	16	3	6	7	19	25	15
Monagas	16	3	5	8	18	24	14

CENTRAL & NORTH AMERICA

MEXICO

OPENING CHAMPIONSHIP
Regular season

Nov 19: Cruz Azul 1 Monterrey 2; Guadalajara 1 Tecos UAG 0; Dorados 2 Jaguares 1; Tigres 3 Pumas UNAM 1; Veracruz 1 Pachuca 3; Necaxa 3 Atlas 5.
Nov 20: San Luis 2 Morelia 1; America 4 Atlante 3; Santos 4 Toluca 1.
Nov 26: Atlante 2 Tigres 0; Atlas 1 San Luis 0; Jaguares 5 Santos 1; Monterrey 4 America 1; Morelia 2 Veracruz 1; Pachuca 0 Cruz Azul 0; Pumas UNAM 2 Dorados 0; Tecos UAG 3 Necaxa 2; Toluca 3 Guadalajara 0.

MEXICO – OPENING – GROUP 1 – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
America	17	12	2	3	34	22	38
Necaxa	17	9	4	4	35	31	31
Tecos UAG	17	7	3	7	27	28	24
Morelia	17	6	2	9	27	29	20
San Luis	17	4	4	9	18	25	16
Atlante	17	4	3	10	29	37	15

GROUP 2 – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Toluca	17	9	3	5	27	21	30
Pachuca	17	7	7	3	26	18	28
Santos	17	5	5	7	31	31	20
Dorados	17	5	3	9	20	31	18
Pumas UNAM	17	4	4	9	17	34	16
Veracruz	17	3	6	8	24	34	15

GROUP 3 – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Monterrey	17	10	5	2	32	20	35
Cruz Azul	17	9	3	5	34	20	30
Tigres	17	6	4	7	30	25	22
Atlas	17	6	3	8	22	24	21
Jaguares*	17	5	8	4	30	27	20
Guadalajara	17	4	7	6	16	22	19

**3pts deducted for failing to comply with League's young player regulations*

Top two from each group and the two third-placed sides with most points qualified for knockout stages

TOP GOALSCORERS*
11 Sebastian Abreu (Dorados)
11 Walter Gaitan (Tigres)
11 Kleber (America)
11 Matias Vuoso (Santos)
**Regular season only*

Quarter-finals, 1st legs
Nov 30: Tecos UAG 0 Monterrey 3; Pachuca 2 Necaxa 0.
Dec 1: Tigres 1 America 3; Toluca 1 Cruz Azul 0.

Quarter-finals, 2nd legs
Dec 3: Monterrey 4 Tecos UAG 0 *Monterrey 7-0 on agg*; Necaxa 0 Pachuca 2 *Pachuca 4-0 on agg.*
Dec 4: America 1 Tigres 4 *Tigres 5-4 on agg*; Cruz Azul 0 Toluca 0 *Toluca 1-0 on agg.*

Semi-finals, 1st legs
Dec 7: Tigres 1 Monterrey 0.
Dec 8: Pachuca 0 Toluca 0.

AFRICA

AFRICAN CONFEDERATION CUP

Final, 1st leg
Nov 6 - Port Harcourt
Dolphin (Nig) 1 (Bello 85)
FAR Rabat (Mor) 0
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 12,000. **Ref:** Sillah (Gam)

Final, 2nd leg
Nov 19 - Rabat
FAR Rabat 3 (Serraj 10, 45, Ajraoui 63)
Dolphin 0
HT: 2-0. **Att:** 40,000. **Ref:** Guirat (Tun)
FAR Rabat 3-1 on agg

CAMEROON

CAMEROON – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Cotonsport	34	20	11	3	47	18	71
Aigle Royal	34	15	8	11	36	29	53
Les Astres	34	14	9	11	47	41	51
Fovu Baham	34	13	12	9	38	33	51
Sahel Maroua**	34	15	7	12	38	37	50
Foudre S'tive	34	14	8	12	43	33	50
Canon Sportif**	34	13	12	9	38	29	49
Sable Batie	34	12	13	9	37	29	49
Esperance	34	12	9	13	30	34	45
Bamboutos	34	12	8	14	31	27	44
Racing B'sam	34	11	11	12	23	30	44
Kadji SA	34	12	7	15	45	52	43
Union Sportive	34	11	8	15	43	43	41
Mount C'roon	34	9	14	11	27	27	41
PWD Bamenda	34	9	13	12	22	37	40
Tonnerre Y'de*	34	10	9	15	32	40	38
Univ Ng'dere	34	7	12	15	23	40	33
Unisport Bafang	34	6	11	17	27	48	29

**1pt deducted **2pts deducted*

GHANA

GHANA – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Asante Kotoko	30	18	9	3	37	15	63
Hearts of Oak	30	16	8	6	47	28	56
King Faisal B	30	15	5	10	41	32	50
Arsenal	30	14	5	11	34	28	47
Real Sportive	30	13	8	9	24	25	47
Liberty Pros	30	12	6	12	42	29	42
Ashanti Gold	30	12	6	12	29	24	42
Feyenoord Acad	30	11	8	11	26	29	41
Tamale Utd*	30	13	4	13	34	35	40
Power FC	30	10	8	12	29	31	38
Tano Bafoakwa	30	10	7	13	24	33	37
Hasaacas	30	10	6	14	30	33	36
Heart of Lions	30	10	6	14	34	42	36
Okwahu Utd	30	9	5	16	20	30	32
Ebusua Dwarfs	30	9	5	16	26	39	32
Hotspurs	30	9	2	19	23	47	29

**3pts deducted*

IVORY COAST

IVORY COAST – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
ASEC Abidjan	26	21	3	2	39	9	66
Africa Sport	26	15	10	1	32	10	55
Jeunesse Club	26	14	3	9	32	22	45
Issia Wazi	26	13	5	8	35	24	44
Sewe Sport	26	10	12	4	31	22	42
SC Gagnoa	26	12	4	10	35	36	40
Stade Abidjan	26	9	8	9	25	27	35
Stella Club	26	8	8	10	35	29	32
AS Denguele	26	7	8	11	29	29	29
Reveil Club	26	7	6	13	28	37	27
ES Bingerville	26	6	8	12	17	30	26
Sabe Sports	26	5	8	13	19	34	23
CO Bouafle	26	6	3	17	14	34	21
Satellite FC	26	4	4	18	19	47	16

ASIA

2006 CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

Group stage draw

Group A
Al Ittihad (Syr)
Al Qadisiya (Kuw)
Foolad (Irn)
Pakhtakor (Uzb)

Group B
Al Ain (UAE)
Al Hilal (Sau)
Al Minaa (Irq)
Mashal (Uzb)

Group C
Al Gharafa (Qat)
Al Karama (Syr)
Al Wahda (UAE)
Saba Battery (Irn)

Group D
Al Arabi (Kuw)
Al Quwa Al Jawiya (Irq)
Al Sadd (Qat)
Al Shabab (Sau)

Group E
Da Nang (Vie)
Dalian Shide (Chn)
Gamba Osaka (Jap)
South Korean FA Cup winners 2005

Group F
Arema Malang (Ins)
Tobacco Monopoly (Tha)
Tokyo Verdy 1969 (Jap)
Ulsan Hyundai (SKo)

Group G
Dong Tam Long An (Vie)
Persipura Jayapura (Ins)
Provincial Electrical Authority (Tha)
Shanghai Shenhua (Chn)

Group winners qualify for quarter-finals; holders Al Ittihad (Sau) receive bye to quarter-finals

Matchdays: March 8, March 22, April 12, April 26, May 3, May 17

2006 AFC CUP

Group stage draw

Group A
Al Ahed (Leb)
Brothers Union (Ban)
Mahindra United (Ind)
Muharraq (Bhn)

Group B
Al Hilal (Yem)
Al Nasr (Oma)
Dempo (Ind)
MERW (Tkm)

Group C
Al Wihdat (Jor)
Bangladeshi champions 2005
Dhofar (Oma)

Group D
Al Faisaly (Jor)
Al Nijmeh (Leb)
MTTU (Tkm)

Group E
Home United (Sin)
New Radiant (Mdv)
Perlis (Mly)
Sun Hei (HK)

Group F
Happy Valley (HK)
Hurriya (Mdv)
Selangor (Mly)
Tampines Rovers (Sin)

Group winners and the two runners-up with the best records against the teams finishing 1st and 3rd in their respective groups qualify for quarter-finals

Matchdays: March 7, March 21, April 11, April 25, May 2, May 16

JAPAN

Nov 20: Urawa Reds 4 Tokyo Verdy 1969 1; Kashiwa Reysol 1 Shimizu S-Pulse 2; FC Tokyo 2 JEF United 1; Yokohama F Marinos 3 Sanfrecce Hiroshima 1; Jubilo Iwata 2 Albirex Niigata 3; Nagoya Grampus Eight 2 Gamba Osaka 1; Cerezo Osaka 2 Kawasaki Frontale 0; Vissel Kobe 0 Omiya Ardija 1; Oita Trinita 1 Kashima Antlers 1.
Nov 23: Kashima Antlers 0 Yokohama F Marinos 2; Omiya Ardija 1 Gamba Osaka 0; JEF United 1 Urawa Reds 0; Tokyo Verdy 1969 0 Nagoya Grampus Eight 0; Kawasaki Frontale 0 Jubilo Iwata 2; Albirex Niigata 0 FC Tokyo 1; Shimizu S-Pulse 1 Vissel Kobe 0; Cerezo Osaka 1 Oita Trinita 1; Sanfrecce Hiroshima 0 Kashiwa Reysol 0.
Nov 26: Urawa Reds 1 Jubilo Iwata 0; Kashiwa Reysol 5 Tokyo Verdy 1969 1; FC Tokyo 1 Kawasaki Frontale 1; Yokohama F Marinos 1 Cerezo Osaka 1; Shimizu S-Pulse 2 Kashima Antlers 2; Gamba Osaka 1 JEF United 2; Oita Trinita 2 Omiya Ardija 1.
Nov 27: Nagoya Grampus Eight 0 Albirex Niigata 1; Vissel Kobe 2 Sanfrecce Hiroshima 3.
Dec 3: Kashima Antlers 4 Kashiwa Reysol 0; Omiya Ardija 1 Yokohama F Marinos 1; JEF United 2 Nagoya Grampus Eight 1; Tokyo Verdy 1969 4 Oita Trinita 2; Kawasaki Frontale 2 Gamba Osaka 4; Albirex Niigata 0 Urawa Reds 4; Jubilo Iwata 1 Vissel Kobe 0; Cerezo Osaka 2 FC Tokyo 2; Sanfrecce Hiroshima 3 Shimizu S-Pulse 1.

JAPAN – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Gamba Osaka	34	18	6	10	82	58	60
Urawa Reds	34	17	8	9	65	37	59
Kashima Antlers	34	16	11	7	61	39	59
JEF United	34	16	11	7	56	42	59
Cerezo Osaka	34	16	11	7	48	40	59
Jubilo Iwata	34	14	9	11	51	41	51
Sanfrecce H	34	13	11	10	50	42	50
K'saki Frontale	34	15	5	14	54	47	50
Yokohama FM	34	12	12	10	41	40	48
FC Tokyo	34	11	14	9	43	40	47
Oita Trinita	34	12	7	15	44	43	43
Albirex Niigata	34	11	9	14	47	62	42
Omiya Ardija	34	12	5	17	39	50	41
Grampus Eight	34	10	9	15	43	49	39
Shimizu S-Pulse	34	9	12	13	40	49	39
Kashiwa Reysol	34	8	11	15	39	54	35
Tokyo Verdy	34	6	12	16	40	73	30
Vissel Kobe	34	4	9	21	30	67	21

SOUTH KOREA

OVERALL CHAMPIONSHIP PLAY-OFFS

Semi-finals
Nov 20: Busan 0 Incheon 2; Songnam 1 Ulsan 2.

Final, 1st leg
Nov 27
Incheon 1 (Radoncic 89)
Ulsan 5 (Machado 13, 58, Lee Chun-soo 37, 45, 72)
HT: 0-3

Final, 2nd leg
Dec 4
Ulsan 1 (Choi Sung-guk 18)
Incheon 2 (Radoncic 14, 26)
HT: 1-2
Ulsan 6-3 on agg

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the Knowledge

everything you need to know about...

Drugs test excuses

ERNST JEAN-JOSEPH of Haiti was the first player to fail a drugs test at a World Cup. He tested positive after his team's 3-1 defeat by Italy at the 1974 finals. He blamed medicine given to him at home to ward off asthma attacks. He was suspended for a year.

Scotland's Willie Johnston tested positive for stimulant fencamfamine at the 1978 World Cup. He claimed he had mistakenly taken the drug in a flu cure to help him sleep better after the 3-1 defeat by Peru.

At the 1986 World Cup, Ramon Caldere of Spain tested positive for the stimulant ephedrine, but was not punished because FIFA was satisfied that he had been given the drug innocently in a bronchitis cure by the team doctor.

Cocktail party…Maradona scores at USA 94

Diego Maradona was famously banned for 15 months by FIFA after testing positive for a "cocktail of drugs" following Argentina's victory over Nigeria at the 1994 World Cup. Five different substances – ephedrine, pseudo-ephedrine, phenylpropanolamine, non-pseudo-ephedrine and methylephedrine – were found in his urine sample. Immediately after the test results were announced, Argentina team doctor Ernesto Ugalde claimed Maradona had taken two medicines, Decidex and Nastizol, to combat an allergy. The player's agent, Marcos Franchi, then claimed that Maradona mistakenly took a diet preparation called Ripped Fuel, which contained ephedrine, after running out of another, legal, diet substance called Ripped Fast.

During the qualifying campaign for the 1994 World Cup, Brazilian keeper Zetti and Bolivian defender Rimba both tested positive for cocaine after a game. Both protested their innocence and it was eventually established they had both drunk trimate, a local herb tea that contains coca leaves, before the game.

Saadi Al-Gadafy, son of Libyan leader Colonel Gadafy, tested positive for anabolic steroid nandrolone in October 2003 after a Serie A match for Perugia. The club blamed it on drugs administered in Germany as part of a treatment for a back problem.

French international Christophe Dugarry tested positive for nandrolone in 1999 but got off on a technicality – the doctor who took the sample was qualified but had not yet taken the Hippocratic oath.

In April 2005 Senad Tiganj, a member of Slovenia's 2002 World Cup squad, tested positive for the banned drug Fenoterol after a game for Rot-Weiss Erfurt in the German Second Division. Fenoterol is a substance used in inhalers to treat asthma.

In December 2003, Beijing Hyundai defender Zhang Shuai became the first Chinese player to fail a drugs test after he tested positive for ephedrine. The 22-year-old protested his innocence, claiming he accidentally ingested the substance in a cold remedy.

Bad hair day…Manuele Blasi blamed his shampoo for his positive test for nandrolone

A few months later, Liu Jiansheng of Liaoning Zhongyu tested positive for the banned stimulant methamphetamine and also for marijuana. Liu claimed he was framed. "I had a drink bought by some self-claimed Liaoning fans. I didn't feel well that night," Liu said. He had initially claimed the positive test was a result of "using drugs to cure his pulmonary disease".

At Euro 2004, Croatia striker Ivica Olic tested positive for the banned substance methylpresnisolone after the 2-2 draw with France, in which he was used as a late substitute. But UEFA accepted the explanation that he was given a painkiller containing methylpresnisolone by team doctors after suffering a rib injury during a Euro 2004 warm-up game.

Painkiller cause…Ivica Olic

Italian midfielder Manuele Blasi tested positive for nandrolone in September 2003 after playing for Parma against Perugia in a Serie A game. The 23-year-old blamed the test result on a shampoo he had been using, but was banned for six months. Blasi was on loan at Parma from Juventus at the time.

In September 1990, Roma players Angelo Peruzzi and Andrea Carnevale tested positive for fentermina after a Serie A game against Bari. At the time, both players claimed they had taken the substance unwittingly since it was in Lipopill weight watcher tablets they had consumed from Peruzzi's mother's supply. Peruzzi recently admitted the story was made up.

Edgar Davids was one of a number of Serie A players who tested positive for nandrolone between 2001 and 2004. Others included Frank De Boer, Fernando Couto, Mohamed Kallon, Jaap Stam and Josep Guardiola. Davids denied any wrongdoing, insisting that he had never even taken an aspirin.

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